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UFFICIO STORICO

ALBERTO SANTONI

LE OPERAZIONI
IN SICILIA E IN CALABRIA

(LUGLIO - SETTEMBRE 1943)

ROMA - 1989

Operations in Sicily and Calabria

Operations in Sicily and Calabria
GENERAL STAFF OF THE ARMY
OFFICE HISTORY

ALBERTO SANTONI

OPERATIONS
IN SICILY AND CALABRIA
(July - September 1943)

ROME -1989

Operations in Sicily and Calabria

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Operations in Sicily and Calabria

PRESENTATION

The additional and large request of "Operations in Sicily and Calabria" -published in 1983 and sold out within a few months - has prompted the Army Staff to the decision to give the reprint of a new edition of the book.

Compared to the first edition, it was intended to make more agile book only by changing the including ideographic sketches for a better understanding of the text, and their placement in the text itself.

THE CHIEF OF THE OFFICE HISTORY

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Operations in Sicily and Calabria

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

art. = artillery

A.U.S.A. = Historical Archive Office S. M. Aeronautica

A.U.S.E. = Historical Archive Office S.M. Army

A.U.S.M. = Historical Archive Office S.M. Marina

Bn = Battalion

bty = battery

C.A. = Corps

a.a. = anti aircraft

at = antitank

CC. NN. = Blackshirts of the Militia

Co. = company

CREM = Royal Corps Man Maritime

D.I.C.A.T. = Italian Territorial Anti-aircraft Defense

Div. = division

FF.AA = Armed Forces

Flak = German anti-aircraft artillery

LCI = Landing Craft Infantry (landing craft infantry)

LCT = Landing Craft Tank (landing craft for tanks)

LST = Landing Ship Tank (ship landing craft for tanks and vehicles)

M. M. = Navy and Naval

MTB = Motor Torpedo Boat (British morosiluranti)

M.V.S.N. = National Security Volunteer Militia

N.A.F. = North African French

N.A.P. = Nuclei Anti Parachute

O.B.S. = Oberbefehlshaber Sud (Southern Command Field Marshal Kesselring Sector)

O.K.W. = Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (German High Command)

O.S.S. = Office of Strategic Service (American military Secret Service)

P.R.O. = Public Record Office (London British State Archives)

PT = Patrol Torpedo (American PT boats)

Q.G. = Headquarters

R.A.F. = Royal Air Force (British Aviation)

RCT = Regimental Combat Team (American regimental tactical group)

Regt. = regiment

S.A.S. = Special Air Serve (Special departments of British Commandos)

S.I.M. = Military Intelligence Service of the Italian Supreme Command

S.M. = Staff

S.M.R.E. = General Staff of the Royal Army

t.s.l. = Gross tons (for cargo ships)

T.F. = Task Force

U.S.A.A.F. = U.S. Army Air Force (US Army Aviation)

CHAPTER I

BRIEF GEOGRAPHIC ABOUT SICILY

1. GENERAL (see Map n. 1)

Sicily, Note triangular shape, with an area of 25,707 square kilometers, is the largest island in the Mediterranean. Its adjusted perimeter is about 800 kilometers (300 respectively between Cape Lilibeo and the Capi Passero and Peloro; 200 kilometers between the latter two) and the actual development of the coastline is 1,115 kilometers.

The Tyrrhenian and Ionian coasts are mostly steep, but with large bays, while the south-western coast is mostly flat and slightly indented.

Sicily is separated from mainland Europe through the Strait of Messina, in the shortest distance is about two miles while Tunisia is about 80 miles, from Gibraltar and Suez 900 miles and from Greece 120 miles.

Make system with Sicily the islands Lipari to the north - Egadi to the west, the Pelagie, Pantelleria and Malta to the south.

According to the 1936 census, the population was about 4,000,000, thickened mostly on the coasts and in 352 municipalities. 69 of whom over 10,000 -20,000 inhabitants.

2. OROGRAPHY (see Map n. 2)

The orographic efforts, effects of subsidence and ascents of the tertiary era essentially vertical in the northern and western parts of the island, gave rise to two mountainous alignments, extending in the direction of the parallels:

a) the northern coastal range includes from east to west the Peloritani, the Caronie, the Madonie, the Mountains of Termini Imerese, the Mountains of Palermo and the Mountains of Trapani;

b) the massive inferno supports Etna and includes the mountains from east to west Erei Mountain and Sicani Mountain.

Between these two alignments the groove is formed from the high valley of Salsa and the valley of Platani, the Belici, of Amendoia, Sosio, Belice left and right Belice.

Peloritani Mountain (gneissic and crystalline) and Caroine (conglomerates and clays) have a chain pattern. With Madonie begins alignment tabular blocks separated by deep cracks (consisting of limestone occur with harsh forms and turreted).

Madonie is part relief of St. Mauro, who apparently is continuing in Erei. The mountains that follow have confused form: limestone islands and islets.

Other massive are moved inwardly. Among them the remarkable limestone and dolomite Busambra Rocca (1,613 m.), which stands between the mountains of Palermo and Sicani in the middle of the Corleone.

The interior alignment leans eastward Etna (3273 m.), volcanic cone with an elliptical base for the development of approximately 145 kilometers.

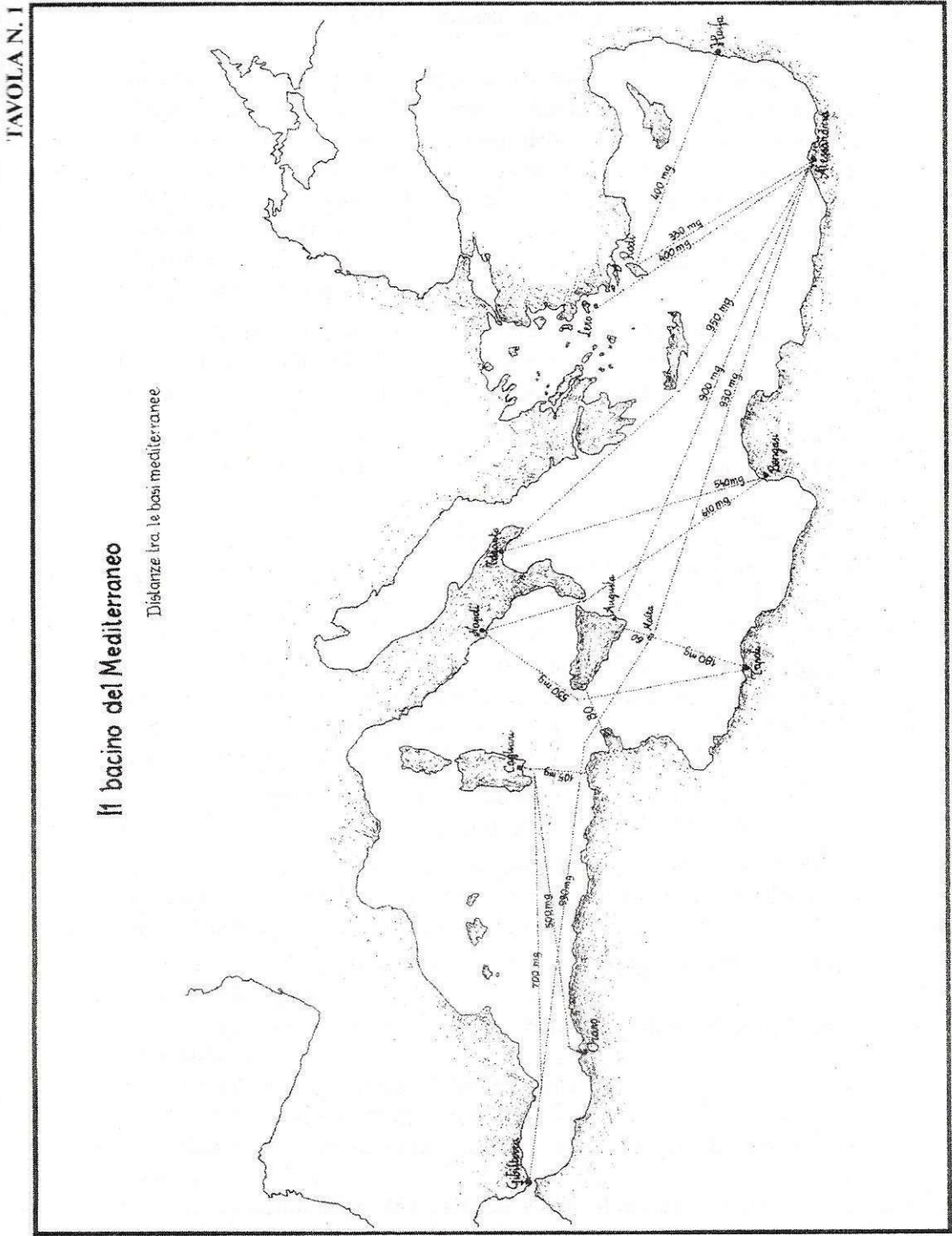
The Erei form a very chaotic complex: you have to hilly and rounded shapes with day outcropping sandstone soils which mark the biggest shares. From Mount Altesina (1192 m.), for Enna, Piazza Armerina, Caltagirone, come to Monte Altopiano (753 m.) where they start the Iblei Mountains,

Sicani Mountain, further to the west, extending between the Belice and Platani and have rounded forms that reach the maximum height of 1,600 meters (Monte Carnmarara 1580 m.).

The southern part of Sicily consists of the following plateaus degrading towards the sea and three major plains.

- The Group of the Iblei Mountains, which extends into the southeastern cusp of the island consists of a limestone platform covered with recent land. It is bordered by the north west highlands of Caltagirone and Canicattini southeast and crossed inside by narrow valleys. Steeping towards the island's interior and slopes gently toward southeast.

- The plateau of Caltagirone is bordered to the west by the alignment



Pietraperzia - Barrafranca - Riesi - Butera, which separates it from the volcanic area of Racalmuto. To the east and south it is bordered instead by the alignment Grammichele - Vizzini - Monterosso - Chiaramonte - Comiso - S. Croce Camerina, which separates it from the plateau of Palazzolo Acreide. Finally, a strip of land volcanic jagged and difficult practicability, between the Maroglio and the river of Caltagirone, divides it into two left longitudinal namely:

a) in the northern part, with Piazza Armerina at the center, characterized by ridges in the 800 meters with sides in terraces, not too steep slopes and easy to follow;

b) in the southern part that slopes down to the Caltagirone, the sea of the Gulf of Gela, and that is engraved shallowly from short and scarce waterways.

-The Plains of Terranova is formed by the lower valley of the river Gela and a coastal strip separated from the sea by a line of dunes about fifty meters. It is the marshy nature, except for the south side of the dunes.

- The plateau Palazzolo Acreide further east is more compact than that of Caltagirone and has more regular shapes, but offers difficult practicability because engraved by rocky clefts often close to each other.

- The plateau Zolfifero Racalmuto, between that of Caltagirone and of Sicani, consists of alternating ridges and basins.

-The Plain of Catania, made up of the basins of the rivers Simeto. Dittaino and Gornalunga, extends south of Etna, while the Pachino plain covers the southeastern cusp of the island.

The geographically most favorable areas to landings from the sea are as follows.

North Coast: Castellammare, Palermo, Termini Imerese and Milazzo;

Ionian coast: Catania, Augusta and Syracuse;

South Coast Marzamemi. and Pozzallo;

Western South Coast: Gela, Licata, Porto Empedocle and Sciacca;

West Coast: Mazara del Vallo, Marsala and Trapani.

3. HYDROGRAPHY (see Map n. 2).

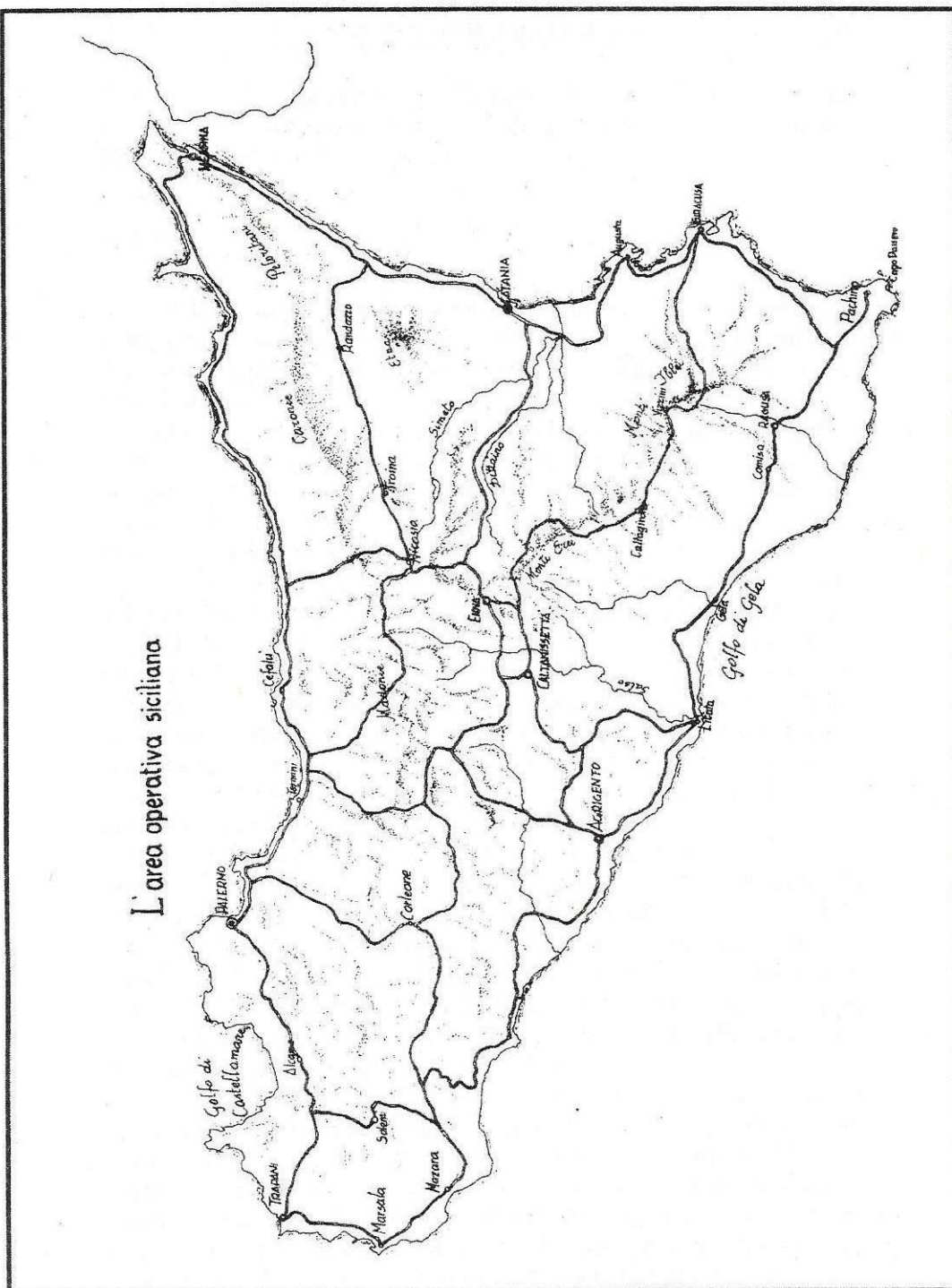
The numerous water courses of Sicily all have streams. Those that flow into the Tyrrhenian Sea are short, steep and normal to the coast and the west the most important appear on Fiumefreddo, the Scanzano, the Leonardo, the Torto, the Fiumara Grande, the Pollina, the Furiano and Rosmarino.

The rivers that flow into the Ionian Sea are longer and more abundant, especially pacing the plain of Catania, including the main one is the Simeto with the right tributaries Oittaino and Gornalunga. The Anapo, which opens at Syracuse is characterized instead from above during cashed in the Iblei Mountains, in deep rocky ravine. Its valley then widens with high and rugged left slope and the steep right to form the pass of Floridia, which ultimately connects to the plain of Syracuse. The Anapo has all short tributaries and deep-set with high rocky banks.

On the southern coast of the most important rivers they are the Irminio, passing at Ragusa, Dirillo, the. Gela and Salso, which flow into the Gulf of Gela, and which are characterized by high courses received and broader and quiet paths along the plain. Further west the Platani descends from the Lerch mountains and Castronuovo at the foot of Monte Cammarata (Sicani Mountains) and flows into the sea between Sciacca and Porto Empedocle. It has perennial waters and its valley, combined with that of the Torto, arrives to Termini Imerese on the Tyrrhenian Sea. Finally, the Belice, after that of the Platani possess the most important area of Sicily. It consists of up to Poggiorcale by the two left and right branches, born respectively in the valley plain of Cireci and Busambra Rocca. After the confluence of the two branches, the Belice runs grossed widening towards the mouth that lies between Selinunre and Ponopalo.

4. COMMUNICATIONS (see Map n. 2)**RAILWAYS**

The entire rail network had in 1943 a development of about 2000 km with the main lines between Messina and Palermo, including Messina, Catania and Siracusa, between Palermo and Agrigento, between Palermo and



between Trapani and Agrigento and Catania. The most important secondary lines, however, were and still are those who access the southern and south-eastern areas.

Roadways

The ordinary state road network was in the same period a development almost similar to that railway, about 2000 km, which should add as many kilometers of radial side streets or double.

From coastal rail vehicles, which combine the main coastal locations, it branches off several roads in together make up almost a lattice, with convergence towards Palermo, more pronounced in western Sicily and less sensitive in the east. We can attempt to divide the road network into three sectors.

-From Palermo to Agrigento, following largely the valley of Platani, it runs the roadway Misilmeri-Lercara Friddi-Casteltermini -Aragona (width 6 m. with gradients of more than 7%, and developing 90 km). Such roadway has doubled in the Palermo-Piana dei Greci -Corleone -Prizzi -Bivona -Raffadali (also wide 6 m. and with slopes greater than 7%), in turn doubled with width m. 4 in the stretch Corleone -Agrigento from Bisacquino -Chiusa Sclafani ..Burgio -Ribera, from where it reaches the coast n. 115.

-To The west of this bundle of communications, along meridians, there is another series of roadway, which departing from Marsala, Mazzara, Castelvetro and Sciacca converge on the main road through the northern n. 113 of Calatafimi, Salemi, S. Ninfa, Gibellina, Pananà and S. Margherita di Belice. The same network is complemented by Trapani -Castellammare that continues along the Tyrrhenian coast, which then constitutes a doubling of Trapani - Alcamo.

-From Coastal Messina -Siracusa n. 114 on the Ionian branch three main routes with longitudinal course, the last two of which reach the Palermo -Lercara Friddi -Agrigento. First of all the roadway n. 120 connecting Randazzo -Troina -Nicosia. Petralia - Cerda and reaches the Tyrrhenian coast n. 113 in the stretch east of Termini Imerese. The second longitudinal rolling stock is the important n. 121 between Catania -Paternò -

Regalbuto - Agira - Enna - S. Caterina Villarmosa -crossroads of Roccapalumba. Finally, the roadway Syracuse - Caltagirone - Piazza Armerina - Enna junction for - Caltanissetta - Canicattì - Agrigento that gradually takes on the numbers 124, 117a and 122.

All three of these longitudinal itineraries are joined by Camastra - Mistretta - Nicosia - Leonforte - Piazza Armerina - Gela cross Main St. Stephen.

From Gela - Piazza Armerina (n. 117) departs instead a link that goes from Ponte Olivo for Riesi and Sommatino and comes into Canicattì and then at Agrigento. Finally the route Syracuse - Piazza Armerina - Caltanissetta collects from the eastern and southern slopes, which will be interested in landing, numerous secondary roadways.

CHAPTER II

ALLIES PROJECTS AND PLANS

1. THE FIRST PROJECTS OF ENGLISH 1940-1941 CONCERNING SICILY

The first British project to the occupation of a strip of metropolitan Italian territory even came to life in October 1940 and had as its object the island of Pantelleria. A plan of landing having that goal (action WORKSHOP), entrusted still only Commando units, was in fact drawn up at the end of that month, that is, the very first in North Africa of the General Wavell famous counteroffensive and even in a time when the British Army in Egypt had to retreat on Sidi El Barrani after the September offensive of General Graziani⁽¹⁾.

In explanation of this seemingly illogical operation such timing is necessary to say that the plan was WORKSHOP determined not by military reasons, but psychological - propaganda, since it was born as a result of information received recurring in London at that period-around mediocre Italian morale especially in Sicily and adjacent islands and about the growing ambitions for local autonomy⁽²⁾.

Also from motives of moral and psychological and not by the trend of military operations in North Africa was inspired by the next and far more important project of invasion of Sicily itself, which nullified the more modest plan of landing in Pantelleria. It was the so-called operation INFLUX.

(1) For the original documents, operation WORKSHOP see. Public Record Office at Kew Gardens in London (henceforth abbreviated to P.R.O., property: ADM 205 folder 11,

(2) See. For example, information from the Polish diplomatic representation at the Vatican, dated September 5, 1940 in P.R.O., property FO 371, folder 24965

established in December 1940 by additional information that guaranteed in London unwillingness to Italian resistance, supported this time by some contemporary and secret "openings" to reach a truce with some generically defined antifascists exponents ⁽³⁾.

In this circumstance the first news about a deterioration of the defensive energy of the people and the Armed Forces of the Kingdom of Italy in London They reached even through the Czechoslovak president Benes and were condensed by the British representative at the Czechoslovak government in exile in a report sent to Foreign Minister Lord Halifax on November 26, 1940⁽⁴⁾. It should be emphasized that at that time there had already been the first Italian military failures in Greece and had already carried out the air and naval attack against the British fleet at Taranto, but had not yet been launched by the British the successful counter-offensive in Cyrenaica, which could have had a more direct strategic connections with Sicily. In the report of 26 November 1940 were provided in the conclusion some examples of Italian low morale that, according to Benes, had greatly worried about the German military attaché in Rome, von Rintelen, who had gone to Berlin to report to bleak the situation in the peninsula ⁽⁵⁾.

Other information of the same content were sent to London by British representatives in Geneva and in Washington on 3 and 4 December 1940, that is, always before the famous counteroffensive of Wavell in Cyrenaica, and the first of them emerged the clear English awareness of the resistance of General Badoglio to the campaign of Greece ⁽⁶⁾.

The main support for this information on the descending Italian morale was, however, by the British Embassy in Stockholm, who led a long and complex negotiations for the surrender of all or part of the Italian route, which in this case would have had to repair at a port of a newly created "Cyrenaica free" ⁽⁷⁾. This last

(3) P.R.O. property PREM 3, folder 234, "*Influx*" operation (*Invasion of Sicily*), December 1940 -February 1941.

(4) P.R.O. property FO 371, folder 24965 mentioned.

(5) P.R.O. property FO 371, folder 24965: *report of the British Mission to the Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia* on 26 November 1940, prot. 36.

(6) P. R.O . property FO 371. folder 24965: *Report of British Consul in Geneva* n. 281 of 3 December 1940 and report by the Marques of Lothian Washington n. 2907 of 4 December 1940. See. Also at the same regard, the British Ambassador in Budapest ratio n. 598 of December 23, 1940.

(7) See for the whole affair "Illustrated History" of March and October 1981, and August and September 1982.

secret contacts began in November 1940, they had the greatest development between January and March 1941, and continued at least until autumn 1942 and then get confused between the many initiatives of that period aimed directly at armistice. However, it is interesting to note that their direct impact on the mentioned INFLUX plan was confirmed by an unsuspected and authoritative source. This is the well-known volume on the landing in Sicily of British historian Hugh Pond, translated and published in Italy since 1964 and we refer the following symptomatic revelations, passed almost unnoticed until now due to lack of hard evidence ⁽⁸⁾.

"In 1940 the British Embassy in Stockholm reported that, according to the statements of a large Italian industrialist, was already alive with his compatriots a deep resentment of the flaws of Italy who had become a satellite of Nazi Germany. The Foreign Office he circulated among his diplomats living abroad instructions because they were greeted with the minimum possible honors Italian ships which enter into British or Italian citizens ports ventured into territory controlled by the British, The news, added to other coming from Italy itself 1 gave way to a series of plans that would be renewed every year, from 1940 to 1943. The first of those plans, called INFLUX, was designed in London by the Heads of the unified General Staff in 1940 and formed the basis of all future landing patterns on the Sicilian coast."

If we look more closely at this plan INFLU.X on the basis of unpublished papers of Churchill we actually demonstrate that it was based on the belief of a low Italian morale and not the fate of the British counter-offensive in North Africa ⁽⁹⁾. And at the very explicit about the Churchill sent Memorandum of 27 December 1940 Plans by the War Office, where immediately pointed out the following.

"In Relation to our plans for Italy's elimination from the war have prepared a plan for the occupation of Sicily (Influx). It is based on the reduction of moral in Italy, able to offer only limited resistance, the fundamental point of our plan is represented by the time factor, it does not we can afford to wait for Germans to rush into Sicily and we have to take the initiative at the crucial moment "(10),

(8) H. POND: *Sicilla*, Milan 1964, p. 43.

(9) P.R.O. property PREM 3, Folder 234. "*Influx*" operation (*Invasion of Sicily*), December 1940 - February 1941

(10) P.R.O. property PREM 3, folder 234 cited.

They followed the details of the plan, which provided occupation by direct preliminary landings at Catania and then Messina, with the initial grounding of four battalions and a thousand *Commandos*, followed the same day by a brigade reinforced with an armored regiment and then by another brigade and elements of the RAF. By the eighteenth day of the landing they would finally arrived in Sicily directly from the British Isles another two brigades.

Orders to this effect were sent on December 31 to General Wavell, Admiral Cunningham, commander of the "*Mediterranean Fleet*," and to the Governor of Malta; but strong doubts on the possibility to actually perform the landing were soon expressed by First Sea Lord - and a message to the same Cunningham of 24 January 1941 pointed out disconsolately the realization of the feared German consolidation in Sicily. "Nevertheless - pointed out by the First Sea Lord -the importance of Sicily for our Mediterranean strategy is such that we must always have ready plans for its conquest in case of unexpected circumstances favorable to us, such as a dissidence between Italians and the Germans"⁽¹¹⁾.

The German intervention in Sicily, which began in December 1940 with the arrival on the island of X *Fliegerkorps*, and the subsequent decision to allocate English Army troops and means of Wavell to the Greek front not only led to the cancellation of the *INFLUX* plan in 2 February 1941, but also interrupted the victorious British advance in Cyrenaica and, within Italy, greatly subsided the maneuvers of dissent. It is still the case to reiterate that, unlike what you would led to believe at first, this project examined the first English landing in Sicily was determined by the desire to take advantage by London of the reported Italian moral decay at the end of 1940 and however he was not born from the desire to militarily take advantage of the unexpected great victory of Gen. Wavell in Cyrenaica, which for that matter had not yet outlined at the time of planning *INFLUX*.

More articulate reasons instead had the next English level of invasion of Sicily called WHIPCORD and studied

(11) P.R.O. property PREM 3, folder 234, *dispatch of the First Lord of the Sea* # 790 of January 24, 1941.

between 17 and 30 October 1941. It provided for a series of landings in Catania, Augusta, Palermo and Milazzo to be made on December 9, 1941 in the presumption, then not realized, that the Crusader offensive in North Africa would lead to stable final conquest of the Cyrenaica airports ⁽¹²⁾.

However the project for *WHIPCORD*, canceled on October 30, 1941, reflected the British belief that the near collapse of Italian and a continued claim to independence by the island's population. They provide so many proofs numerous information received in London between August and October 1941 by Washington, the representative of the Polish government in exile and from Switzerland and containing assurances on the readiness of the Sicilian separatist ⁽¹³⁾. It shall then confirm a precise report of the Joint Intelligence Committee in Washington on 28 October 1941 when, based on information from the US Embassy in Rome, was mentioned the existence in Italy of a group of dissidents headed by Badoglio and it was suggested certainly solicitous a British landing in Sicily ⁽¹⁴⁾.

To paint the situation on the island in colors even more rosy for the English interjected finally, with a lot of imagination, Count Sforza, who by far the United States made it known to the Allies on June 3, 1942 that the Mafia was actively pro-British, that "*in Sicily occurred terrible sabotage and passive resistance*" and that "almost every day the German soldiers on the island were being targeted by the people" ⁽¹⁵⁾.

However, despite these encouraging reports from all sides, the Allies decided not delude too much the Italians dissidents in general and the Sicilians in particular before the actual invasion of the island ⁽¹⁶⁾, They strove instead to prove

(12) For this new plan cf. P.R.O. property WO 193. Folder 810 "*whipcord*" invasion of Sicily, October 1941; PREM property 3, 503/1/2/3 folders "*whipcord*" Operation October - November 1941; property ADM 205 11 folder, "*whipcord*". October 1941 Fund WO 169, folder 915; G. Plans, January - December 1941

(13) See., For example. in addition to the aforementioned sources, P.R.O. property FO 371, 33251 Folder: Memorandum on Sicily under Italian rule, p. 12

(14) P.R.O., property FO 371, 29931 Folder: Internal situation in Italy in 1941, JIC / MI ratio / 61/41 of 28 October 1941 on the connection between the depressed Italian moral and the operation WHIPCOARD see. Even f. B.ANDINI: *Vita e morte segreta di Mussolini*. Milan 1978, p. 198-199

(15) P. R.O . property FO 371. Cortella 33251 cit., P. 16

(16) P. R.O . property PREM 3, 365/2 folder: Propaganda in enemy countries. Psychological warfare in connection with "HUSKY" Operation (Sicily).

now generally willing to separate the fate of the Italian people from the responsibilities of the fascist regime, on the basis of the rest of the famous Churchill's radio appeal of 23 December 1940⁽¹⁷⁾.

2. THE STRATEGIC POSITION IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1943 AND THE INTERALLIED CONFERENCES OF CASABLANCA, WASHINGTON AND BRUSSELS

At the beginning of 1943 it could already be glimpsed "the turning point" of the war. In Russia, the catastrophe of Stalingrad ended with Hitler's dreams of a "vital space" to the east; in the Pacific the Japanese had suffered after Midway, the even more decisive defeat of Guadalcanal, which initiated the ebb of their fortunes; Mediterranean counteroffensive Montgomery after El Alamein had led to the conquest of all of Libya, while landings in Africa French North (Operation *TORCH*) the Allies closed in the Tunisian vice the residual Italian-German forces. Finally, even the Battle of the Atlantic was beginning to turn in favor of the Anglo-Americans, thanks to the new systems say location of U-boats, including the increasingly reliable *ULTRA* Intelligence⁽¹⁸⁾.

In this general framework, between the 14 and 23 January 1943 Roosevelt, Churchill and the Joint Chiefs gathered in the Casablanca conference, after Stalin had declined the invitation to not be absent from Moscow during the course of the counter-offensive at Stalingrad.

Was a very delicate moment for the selection of future military operations by Anglo-American, in view of the increased bargaining power of the same Stalin. Indeed contemporary victorious Soviet counter attacks were certainly not offset in the Anglo-American camp by the reconquest of the Peninsula in Papua New Guinea and the now next

(17) P.R.O. property FO 898, folder 349: War of 1939-1945. Political warfare Executive. "Husky": invasion of Italy. The Churchill's radio appeal of the December 23, 1940 is instead found in P.R.O. property makes 371, folder 24967 and folder 33247.

(18) Currently (early 1983) are available in the Public Record Office in Kew Gardens forty folders related to the decryption *ULTRA* against German submarines. Cfr. Defe 3, folders from 705 to 744; Teleprinted translations of decrypted German u-boat traffic. December 1942 - May 1945.

conclusion of long Guadalcanal campaign ⁽¹⁹⁾. Even the imminent occupation of Tripoli was then obscured by propagandistically obvious Allied inability to go to Tunis quickly.

In short, it seemed that on that ideal poker table hand had passed much to Stalin who, although absent, was able to hear quite clearly until Casablanca his renewed demands for the immediate opening of a second front on the European continent .

The conference is immediately formed two doctrinal currents: the American one, largely represented by Gen. Marshall, eager to preserve intact the Allied resources for a next attack across the Channel, and the English which, with conclusive statistical data, he pointed out while reluctantly that against predictable 44 German divisions in France the allies could barely gather in the United Kingdom for September 1943 only 24 divisions ⁽²⁰⁾.

Given the situation of the moment, was therefore preferable for the British to continue the so-called "peripheral strategy", aiming to steal from the defense of "Fortress Europe" at least 55 German divisions stationed in France and on the eastern front, to protect the south front and the Balkans. Ultimately this peripheral strategy could also determine the collapse of Italy, of which London had known the moral, and the intervention in the war of Turkey. In conclusion with this attack the "soft underbelly of the Axis would be exploited fully the Mediterranean opening began with the operation *TORCH* would arise and greater prospects of success for the future invasion across the English Channel (Operation initially called *ROUND-UP*, with the organizational part called *BOLERO*) ⁽²¹⁾.

The Allied decision was not easy, because in the same British camp, and especially in the upper echelons of the Admiralty, was strongly rooted belief that to procrastinate too long the invasion of northern France would prolong the

(19) See. A. SANTONII *Storia generale della guerra in Asia e nel Pacifico da 1937 to 1941*, vol. II; *Il riflusso della marea*. Modena 1978 Pagg.75-165.

(20) HE MAJESTY'S OFFICE STATIONARY: *Grand Strategy*, Vol IV by M. Howard, London 1972, Pp. 252-25421

(21) E.B. POTTER - C. W. NIMITZ. *La grande guerra sui mari*, Milano 1965, p. 173-174

asphyxiating the merchant shipping losses, amounting to a monthly average of 500-600 thousand tons, by the German *U -boats* operating from the Bay of Biscay.

Historiography on the day Casablanca Conference, especially the American and Marxist bit too often an accusing finger at Churchill, portraying him as a prejudiced opponent of landing plane over the English Channel, to the deliberate anti-Soviet way of preventing the creation of a second front for 1943. To this respect you forget the clear warning of the same Churchill. He had sent to his Chiefs of the G. S. on November 9, 1942, the very beginning of the landings in North Africa. The British prime minister on that occasion in fact was to express⁽²²⁾.

"It would be very unfortunate that the exploitation of the success of TORCH and the battle of El Alamein was limited in 1943 to the occupation of Sicily and Sardinia ... Running in the meantime operation TORCH can not be an excuse to just stay idle during 1943 and to be content with landings in Sicily and Sardinia and some other operation on the type of Dieppe that day, which can be considered at best as an experiment ... you can really believe that the Russians will not be pleased to see us so much idle throughout 1943, while Hitler will submit them to a third pressing?. "

In the same regard, he is silent often also of the letter that 24 November 1942 was sent to Roosevelt and Churchill in which among other things stated the following⁽²³⁾:

"It seems to me that it would be .a very serious decision to give up the operation ROUND-UP. Operation TORCH can not replace it because it engages only 13 divisions facing the 48 planned for ROUND-UP. All my conversations with Stalin, this Averell, were based on the assumption of the subject to a referral ROUND-UP, but you never let assume that we would not have attempted to create a second front in Europe in 1943, or perhaps even in 1944 ". "

There seems indisputable so the good faith of Churchill, as well as the objective Allied difficulty to keep faith with the background and a bit too hasty plans to undertake a vigorous landing across the Channel. It was therefore a more accurate and balanced assessment of their finite resources against German ones in France who convinced the British and Americans with Churchill in the lead, to

(22) W. Churchill: *La seconda guerra mondiale*, ed. Oscar Mondadori, Milano 1970, vol VIII. p. 283-284

(23) *Ibid*, p. 286

orient their projects in the other direction and be content to broaden in 1943 their domination in the Mediterranean.

In such. Basin existed immediately tell possibility to organize two alternating amphibious operations: that against Sicily (operation HUSKY) and against Sardinia (operation BRIMSTONE). The invasion of the latter island was named as preferred by the combined plans and especially by Gen. Eisenhower and Lord Mountbatten, whereas it could be made three months before and considering the best location of its airports for a more profitable pounding of Northern Italy ⁽²⁴⁾. But Churchill, leaning American Admiral King, insisted on a landing in Sicily; To be prepared at most for the month of July and possibly for June considering the conquest of the most important island in the Mediterranean for control of greater publicity in front of the Russians and wider more psychological extensive on the already low morale of the Italian people. Finally its greater proximity to the African shores would have allowed a more massive air support to the landing ⁽²⁵⁾.

On January 18, 1943 the invasion of Sicily was accepted by participants in the conference of Casablanca and then fixed to the favorable phase of the moon on July 25 or 22 August. The general objectives were identified as follows:

- a) make the maritime communication line that crossed the Mediterranean safer;
- b) ease German pressure on the Russian front,
- c) intensify the pressure on Italy,
- d) to facilitate the negotiations to persuade Turkey to enter the war on the side of the Allies ⁽²⁶⁾.

In the next conference "Trident" held in Washington May 12 to 26, 1943, just after the victory in Tunisia, they commended the American delegates that the operations in the Mediterranean remain subsidiary to those in the Channel and in preparation, to strengthen 'their arguments', they threatened to precedence to the Pacific theater. The most that Churchill got in the 'Trident' conference was the promise that the

(24) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, Milano 1978, p. 22-23

(25) P.R.O. property PREM 3, 227/1 folder: "Brimstone" (Sardinia) versus "Husky"

(26) HER MAJESTY'S OFFICE SIATIONERY: Grand Strategy, vol. IV, p 254

Committee of Chiefs of the G.S. Allies would set up, in relation to the performance of the operations in Sicily, those campaigns further limited to Sardinia and Corsica, deemed suitable to the exploitation of the success and held out the elimination of Italy from the conflict ⁽²⁷⁾. The Chiefs of the G.S however did not accept for the moment the proposal of Churchill to continue a challenging campaign in the Italian peninsula after HUSKY, inspired by the desire not to leave idle the allied troops in the Mediterranean pending the preparation of amphibious operation across the Channel.

At this point Churchill asked Gen. Marshall to accompany him to Eisenhower in Algiers to directly influence the supreme commander of the Anglo-American troops in the Mediterranean.

Between May 29 and June 3 was held then in Algiers, in the villa of Gen. Eisenhower, a meeting in the presence of Churchill, of General Marshall, Alexander, Alan Brooke, Ismay, Bedell Smith, the Air Marshal Tedder and Admiral Cunningham. First of all it was confirmed the need to seize the outlying of the island of Pantelleria (CORKSCREW and operation code-named island HOBGOBLIN), whose conquest was set for 11 June. In this connection, the excluded allies responsible for the attack on Pantelleria would have prevented the surprise for the main enterprise of HUSKY, since the possession of this island could simply indicate the Anglo-American will to ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Sicily ⁽²⁸⁾.

In that same meeting in Algiers then Churchill insisted again to get the military guarantees for the continuation of the campaign in Italy after the occupation of Sicily. Maximum as mentioned, American military leaders seemed willing to make future amphibious operations against Sardinia (operation BRIMSTONE) and Corsica (operation FIREBRAND), but eventually Eisenhower was led by Churchill to promise that "if Sicily had been easily occupied by August 15 he

(27) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: Sicily and the surrender of Italy, edited by A.N. GARLAND -H. McGaw SMYTH -M. Blumenson, Washington 1965, p. 18-19

(28) P.R.O. property PREM 3, folder 227/4: "Husky" operation (Sicily): plans and directives

would be inclined to march directly against Continental Italy" ⁽²⁹⁾.

Indeed the goal of eliminating the weakest Axis partner appeared at that time and with the Allied forces available as the only serious means of bringing direct aid to the Russians, as Churchill wrote to Stalin on 13 June ⁽³⁰⁾. With the invasion and its elimination of the conflict, reputed increasingly at hand, the British and Americans would in fact forced. Germany to rush to the forces into the peninsula, to replace the Italian divisions stationed in the Balkans and in sharpening its reserves to cater to reinforce the principals at the Brenner border, the Maritime Alps and along the Riviera.

In conclusion in Algiers it was reached between the British and Americans the following agreement: if the conquest of Sicily had been brought to completion in mid-August, as indeed happened, it would have been carried out at least one landing in Calabria, considered itself an integral part of operation HUSKY ⁽³¹⁾. Meanwhile it was also necessary to prepare an appropriate action plan in the event that during the campaign of Sicily, exactly as predicted by Gen. Alan Brooke, the occurrence of a collapse of Italy to its exit from the conflict.

Churchill then obtained from this conference the promise of further offensive action in the Mediterranean, which he also considered it a guarantee against the idle Anglo-American military apparatus waiting the ripening of conditions for the invasion of France. However, to curb the ardor of the British Prime Minister, the Americans were able to achieve that as of November 1 of that year seven divisions (four American and three British) stationed in the Mediterranean should be in any case transferred back to Britain in proper preparation of the Normandy landings, originally planned for the May 1944 (32).

(29) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: Sicily and the surrender of Italy, op cit., P. 24 and W. CHURCHILL: *La seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. VIII. Cit., P. 471

(30) F.L. Loewenheim - H.D. LANGLEY - JONES: *Roosevelt-Churchill: carteggio segreto di guerra*, Milano 1977, document 231, p. 389

(31) The British, more wary of the Americans, esteemed that Sicily would not have been conquered first of August 15. Cfr. A. BRYANT: *Tempo di guerra*, Milano 1972. p. 822

(32) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: Sicily and the surrender of Italy, op cit., P 22.

3. THE PLANNING OF "HUSKY" (see maps N. 3 and 4)

The Joint Chiefs G.S. examined in Casablanca on January 20 a closeup of landing in Sicily to be performed no earlier than the favorable phase of the moon in July or August, assuming that the forces then engaged in the African country would be free at the beginning of May⁽³³⁾.

The original plan provided for two simultaneous amphibious operations and two subsequent (see. map n. 3). D day would be the British landed three divisions reinforced straddling the southern tip of Sicily, including Gela and Avola, while a reinforced American Division would make a landing on the far left of the beach front, at Sciacca and Selinunte. Two days after two US divisions would be landed in the Gulf of Castellammare and between Palermo and Termini Imerese and the day D + 3 a British Division reinforced would be landed near Catania, backed by paratroopers⁽³⁴⁾.

The stated justification for such splitting of the Allied offensive resources was in the desire to take over as soon as possible the main Sicilian ports, needed for the logistic support of the campaign.

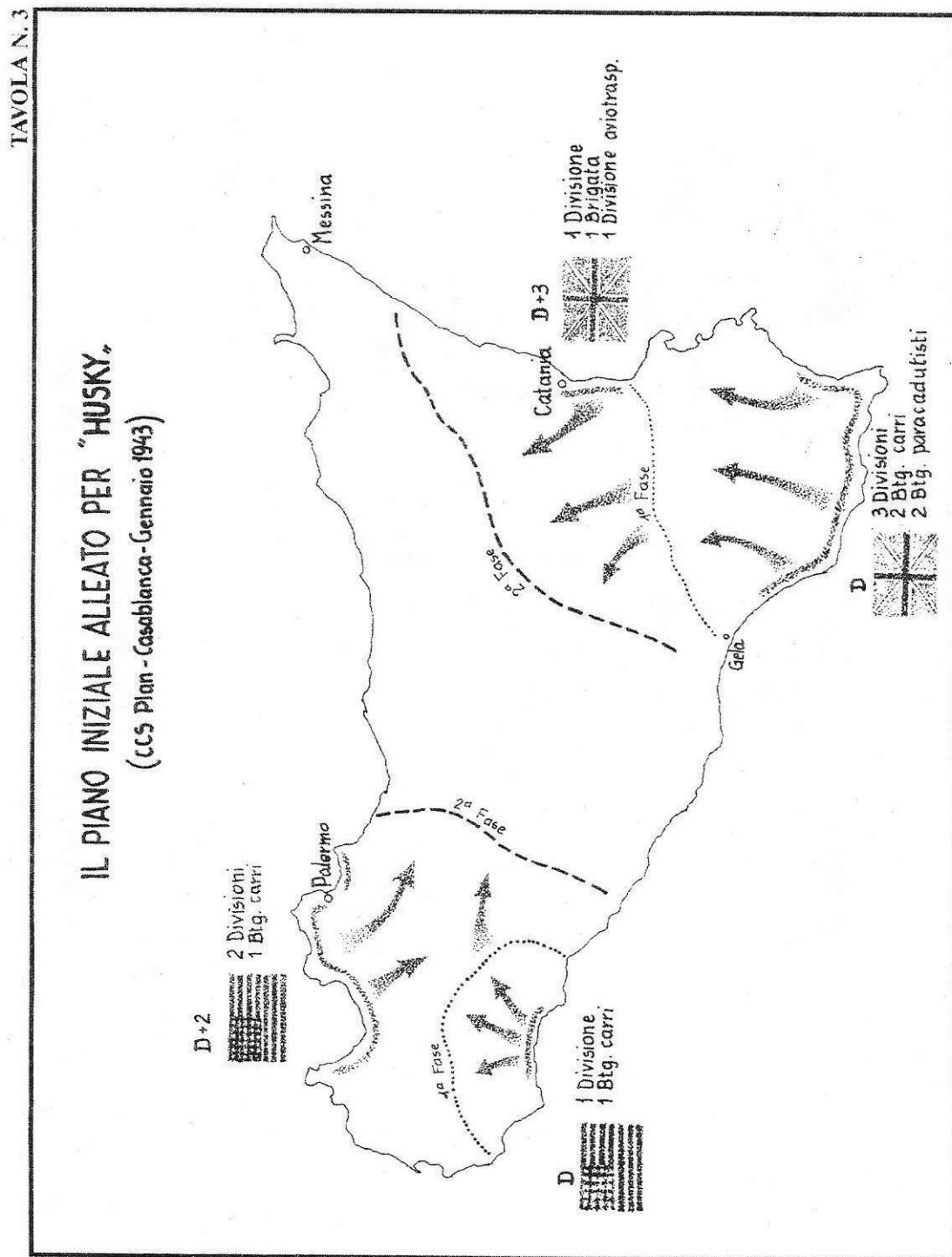
On February 12 was formed in Algiers, in the employ of the British General Gairdner, one Special Plans Office conventionally called "Force 141", which then ended up giving turns to Q.G. XV Army Group⁽³⁵⁾. In this framework was denounced by Montgomery and recognized by Alexander in mid-March, the excessive size and dispersion of the British beachheads in relation to the available troops, as well as their vulnerability to an enemy counterattack from within. By contrast, the reduction of the front of the British landing would have prevented urges

(33) HER MAJESTY'S OFFICE STATIONERY: History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. V: The Sicily campaign in 1943 and the campaign in Italy 3rd September 1943 to 31st March 1944, London 1973, page 4

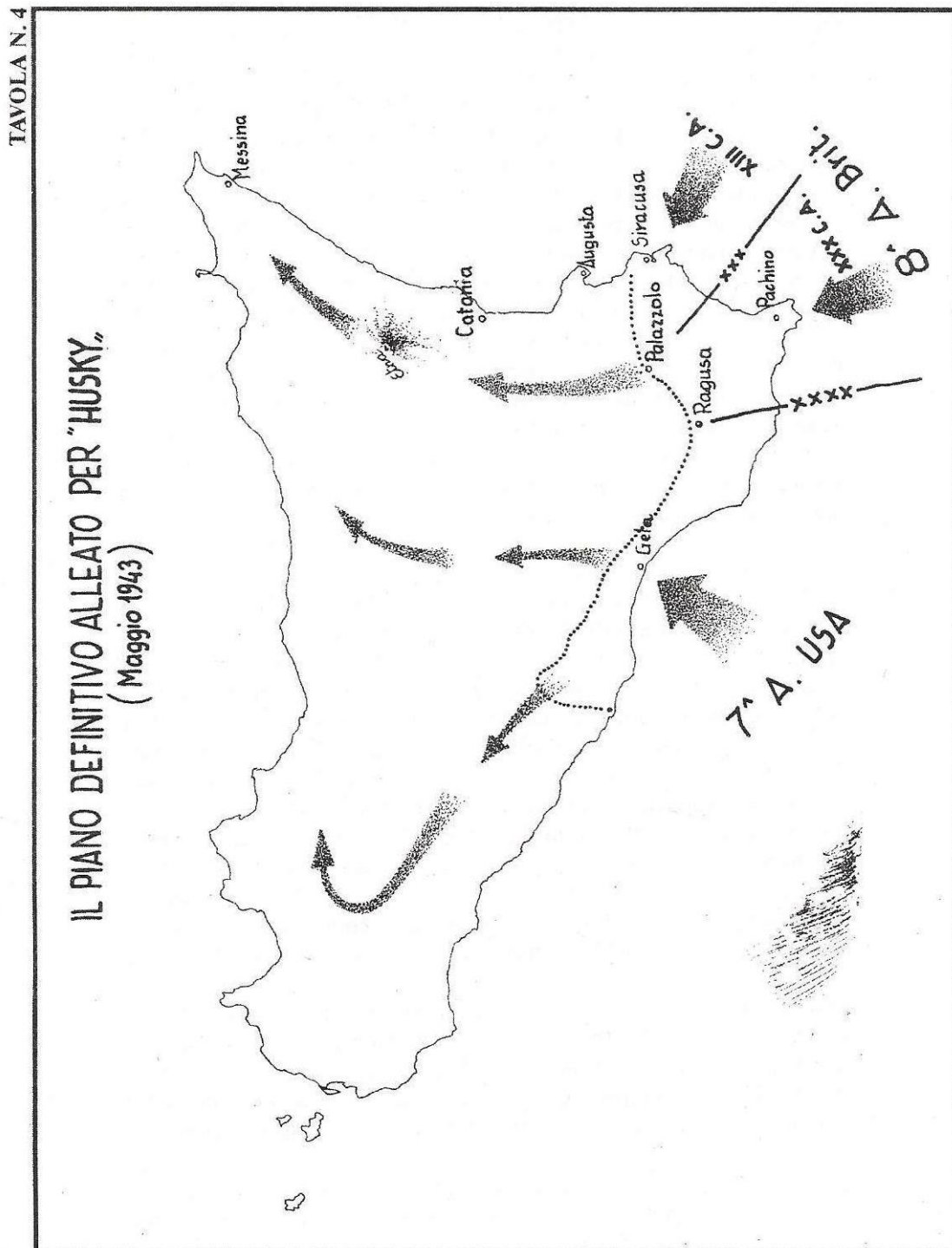
(34) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: Grand Strategy, vol. IV; op. Cit. P. 266

(35) The "Force 141". She drew its name from the Number of a hotel room "San Girorgio of Algiers, where he met for the first time, Soon, however, planners will move to the Normal School of Bouzarea, a suburb of Algiers, and they were joined by other elements the Command of Adm. Hewitt. The name of the XV Army Group was born instead of the arithmetic sum of the 7th US Army Patton's 8th British Army of Montgomery that would participate in the Sicilian countryside. Cfr. E. Linklater: The campaign in Italy, London in 1951, Pp. 17-18

THE INITIAL PLAN ALLIED FOR "HUSKY".
(C.C.S Plan - Casablanca - January 1943)



THE FINAL PLAN ALLIED FOR "HUSKY"
(May 1943)



occupation of the airports around Gela, inconvenience that Air Marshal Tedder considered greatly prejudicial to the direct aerial coverage of troops of Catania.

Then took shape between March 18 and April 18 a second project based on canceling the American landing between Sciacca and Selinunte, on finding other amphibious ships to carry four divisions of British landing force between Gela and Avola and the consequent need logistics three days of others postpone (for a total of five) transport and landing of American troops in Castellammare and in Palermo ⁽³⁶⁾.

This second project was approved by Eisenhower on April 10, but it was still characterized by the excessive amplitude of the beachhead of the British 8th Army, although reinforced by an additional division, and would allow the enemy to concentrate his forces against now only invading the field producing failure of HUSKY before the delayed trip to the north of the Americans.

Montgomery, therefore, did not accept either the above solution, and on April 24 sent a strong protest to his superior in Gen. Alexander, presenting them in terms tough enough that the solution was to abandon entirely the planned American amphibious action on Castellammare and at Palermo and in place the two sectors of landing Anglo-American at the two sides of the southern tip of Sicily on an almost continuous front of approximately 170 kilometers, performing the dual operation simultaneously. In this way the Americans would protect the left flank of the British 8th Army directed on Catania and would have invested themselves the Gela airports. The importance of winning the main ports in the first phase of invasion was instead downsized by the arrival of modern landing craft capable of carrying troops and supplies directly on open beaches.

In a new meeting in Algiers Eisenhower was persuaded on May 2 by the arguments of Montgomery and the next day Alexander changed the plan in the direction desired by the latter, even imposing on Adm. Cunningham and the Marshal of Air Tedder, opposed to this variant, provided that the new project

(36) HER MAJESTY'S OFFICE SIATIONERY: History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. V: The Sicily campaign in 1943 and the campaign in Italy 3rd September 1943 to 31st March 1944, London 1973, pp. 19-20

left in enemy hands all the airports of western Sicily. But the majority prevailed, and on May 13 the Committee of the Joint Chiefs of G.S. approved the change and what the final plan (map no. 4), although the long diatribe cost him the resignation of Gen. Gairdner⁽³⁷⁾.

As concerned the date of implementation of operation, it was initially determined generically in the Casablanca Conference for favorable moon day period of July or August and was later identified more precisely as July 25 or August 22⁽³⁸⁾. But one should not forget the energetic recommendations and non-dormant hopes of Churchill for an advance on landing in June⁽³⁹⁾. Among other things the opportunity to these pressures the British Prime Minister was confirmed by Marshal Kesselring right when he wrote in his memoirs that "*every day of delay for the opponent was for us something more*"⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Allied planners had to anyway soon recognize the inability of HUSKY operation in such a short time away and on April 13 went only partially meet the wishes of Churchill, setting the D day for July 10 and 02:45 for the H hour of the landing from the sea, after identifying for the date of the moon conditions sufficiently favorable⁽⁴¹⁾.

In those same days of April Churchill had to send to the Joint Chiefs of G.S. a severe warning about what he called "*cowardly and defeatist doctrines*" about the dangers that the HUSKY operation would face if more than two German divisions had been stationed in Sicily. This excessive timidity on the part of Anglo-American planners had actually found the same Eisenhower as a spokesperson, that on April 7 declared that the landing would offer little chance of success if into the island had been placed substantial and well equipped German land forces, specifying that the term

(37) P.R.O. property PREM 3, folder 227/4: "Husky" operation (Sicily): plans and directives

(38) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: Sicily and the surrender of Italy, op cit., P 10

(39) P.R.O. property PREM 3, folder 227/5: "Husky" operation (Sicily): dates of operation

(40) A. KESSELRING: *Memorie di guerra*, Milano 1954, p. 169

(41) For favorable moon phase allies intended a sunset after midnight, to allow the preliminary launch of paratroopers with a certain brightness and next to the sea in complete darkness.

'Substantial' should apply in the case of presence of more than two German divisions.
At about the same time Eisenhower admitted in his memoirs that:

"The Chiefs of our information service were deeply concerned about the strength of the German garrison. They thought -and later experience proved us that our assessment was correct-that if the German garrison at the time of the attack had been substantially greater than two fully armed and equipped divisions, we planned the assault would be too weak and would It was reasonable to postpone the operation until, in which we could make a greater concentration of our forces " ⁽⁴²⁾.

In fact this was excessive timidity, so that Churchill was right in concluding:

"I could not imagine the thought of Stalin on everything, since he has 185 German divisions on his front" ⁽⁴³⁾.

This is not glorious interlude in the HUSKY plan, however, it was soon forgotten.

After the mentioned consent given on May 13 by the Joint Committee of Chiefs of the G.S. to the modified plan by the objections of Montgomery, the 19th, of the same month was issued by Gen. Alexander, commander of the XV Army Group, the order of general operation n. 1 for running the HUSKY plan, which included the following five steps:

- 1) preparatory air and naval operations to neutralize the possible Italian naval activity and win air supremacy;
- 2) Night landing of parachutists and *Commandos* and invasion from the sea in the early hours, with priority objectives the ports of Licata and Syracuse;
- 3) establishment of a solid base from which to conduct operations for the capture of Augusta, Catania and airports near Gerbini;
- 4) occupation of ports and airfields above;
- 5) subjecting the island ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

(42) D.D. EISENHOWER: *Crociata in Europa*, Milano 1949, p. 211

(43) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *Grand Strategy*, vol. IV; op. Cit. Pp. 368-369

(44) SUPPLEMENT TO THE "LONDON GAZETTE" of February 10, 1948: *La conquista della Sicilia dal 10 luglio al 17 agosto 1943*, official report of Gen. H. R. ALEXANDER. To subdue the island the two Allied Armies would have proceeded to cut Sicily in two parts, through Enna, Nicosia and a fantastic blue sea.

The final landing plan is fraught with unknowns, whereas never, before or since, such a mass of troops (initially seven divisions reinforced) making a landing on a front so extensive. In the same D-Day landings of June 1944 there were in fact two divisions less in the first assault wave ⁽⁴⁵⁾. However, it must immediately be said that the ultimate aim, though not explicit, HUSKY, which is to quickly achieve Messina bypassing and trapping the Axis forces on the island, was not reached.

Allied naval forces, as their part, they were called upon to ensure the following four objectives:

- a) coverage of the whole operation against the interference of opposing naval forces;
- b) direct escort of convoys and landing of troops;
- c) support of the landings with the artillery on board, making target of clearly identified objectives, but without the usual preliminary indiscriminate bombardment of the beaches, which was customary in the Pacific instead;
- d) protection of maritime supply lines.

In this regard it was scheduled for July 9, the concentration in the Ionian Sea a naval covering force, made up of four battleships, two aircraft carriers, four cruisers and eighteen destroyers. Another naval force of two battleships, two cruisers and six destroyers stationed in Algiers as a reserve. Finally a light formation of cruisers and destroyers was to protect off the northern flank of the British 8th Army along the direction from Taranto and Messina. A final naval curiosity: for the first time entered service on allied Mediterranean units anti-aircraft proximity fuze 'VT', that so great effectiveness had recently demonstrated in the Pacific (46).

The action of entrusted Anglo-American aviation preparation began on Sicily, though so not particularly flashy, just after the fall of Tunisia, while more intensive bombing began one week before the landing. The allies still took care to develop at that period an almost identical air pressure on Sardinia, the

(45) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. Cit., P. 54

(46) E.B. POTTER - C. W. NIMITZ: *La grande guerra sui mari*, op. Cit., P. 188

aim to keep concealed as much as possible their next objective.

During the intensified action of strategic bombing on Sicily it was particularly targeted the port facilities of Messina and ferry boats as well as the airports of the whole island, soon reduced it impossible to host the Axis bomber squadrons, as we shall see, they were gradually transferred to the continent.

The Anglo-American air forces, by contrast were generally reluctant to plan a close cooperation "tactic" with the disembarking forces. The consequence was that on a list of tactical targets the Sicilian reported by the US 7th Army only two were bombed⁽⁴⁷⁾. In this respect, the eminent American naval historian Morison says that "*amphibious ship sailed and landed without any promise of a tactical support from the air, and in fact almost without being any*"⁽⁴⁸⁾. Finally there were many reported cases in which ground troops fired on friendly aircraft, while the latter several times by mistake targeting its troops⁽⁴⁹⁾.

In light of this surprising lack of prior cooperation between air forces and amphibious forces to form an alliance, the result of a jealous and obtuse preservation of their "strategic" prerogatives by the Command of R.A.F. and by the U.S.A.A.F., is also explained as long as the reluctance of London and Washington planning in that time operations to more aggressive outreach and greater geographic reach in the same Mediterranean basin.

4. ALLIED INFORMATION RESOURCES ABOUT SICILY

After the flow of news already examining the moral and Italian in particular Sicilian received in London between 1940 and 1942, ie at the time of invasion of the examined projects INFLUX and WHIPCORD, the allied leaders, once decided on operation HUSKY, They estimated to be coordinated every day information regarding the Sicily. Therefore, in addition to the Foreign Office, the author of a series of memos between March and July 1943, they are also now kept in the Public Record Office⁽⁵⁰⁾, also the Office of

(47) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op cit. p. 62

(48) S S.E. MORISON: : *In guerra su due oceani*, Florence 1967 pag.246

(49) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op cit. p. 306 I p. 308

(50) See. For example P.R.O. property FO 371, 37263A and 37263B folders Situation in Italy

US Army predispose link to London on February 15, 1943 an interesting and lengthy memo about Sicily, nowadays preserved in the National Archives in Washington ⁽⁵¹⁾. It is divided into several sections, dealing respectively with the moral, the political, the economic, the German presence, the effects of Allied bombing and conclusions. We refer below a summary.

MORAL SITUATION

The report confirmed previous news accumulated in London on the mediocre level of Italian morale, reputedly even lower in Sicily and on the peninsula. Postal interceptions, the interrogation of prisoners, reports of secret agents and those raised by travelers in Italy were unanimous in pointing out that the Italian people were tired of war, who suffered due to lack of power, that the Germans were detested, that the fascist regime had become unpopular especially in Sicily and finally the majority of citizens wanted peace above all else.

Despite this information, however, it advised to be cautious in relation to jump to conclusions, considering the fact that most of the informants despised the Italian character and therefore tended not to assess possible hidden energies of the people. It did not even have forgotten that, despite all the talk of opposition to Fascism and the war, had not yet revealed any sufficiently strong and organized group, with strong and capable leaders, such as to trigger a revolution in Italy in the immediate future.

POLITICAL SITUATION

The deteriorating political situation in Sicily emerged, according to the report, the visits of the island in late November 1942 by the Secretary of the Fascist Party Vidussoni and in December 1942-January 1943 by the King Vittorio Emanuele. The journey of Vidussoni was considered a surprise inspection, which resulted in the removal of many non-publicized

(51) U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES, Washington D. C., Document O.S.S., C.I.D. 30052: Preliminary report on conditions in Sicily, 15th February 1943.

hierarchs of the island, especially in Catania, Siracusa, Messina and Enna. The visit of the King had instead intended to raise the morale of depressed populations for continuous bombings, one of which took place in Palermo during their participation in the sovereign in a ceremony.

At both of these official visits to the propaganda of the regime had not done asking to represent "Sicily as a bulwark" and the Sicilians as loyal and patriotic citizens. The famous political commentator Gayda, according to the report, had indeed caught the "opportunity to support the" Newspaper of Italy "of 17 January 1943 that Sicily, in contrast to what was touting the Anglo-American propaganda, was not, was all neglected by the regime, presenting to about several statistics to show that the benefit of the public works on the island, the government had spent more money there than elsewhere. The comments of the American report was that Gayda protested too hard to be convinced of what he wrote.

Intercepted letters by the Allies had rather got the impression that those who remained in Italy, built the bombing, in common grievances against the policy to those against "criminals of the RAF", although direct insults anti-fascists would not have escaped the cut censorship, most of the intercepted letters if therefore took more easily with fate, bad luck and even with the failure of divine help.

At about the Sicilian separatist movement the report relied on English news source, that the scope of this phenomenon was difficult to assess, while there was no doubt about his pro-Allied trends and the fact that it could be well exploited at the appropriate time.

Even with regard to the Mafia, which like the separatism we will focus in the next paragraph 1 the information available to the Americans were still deemed insufficient in that in February 1943, although it was believed by many that this phenomenon had never been actually shot down by fascism but only tamed and entered into the system and cogs of government. But in recent times seemed to Americans that the Mafia had taken his freedom of action and its anti-administrative function, also making use of the Mediterranean anarchic spirit, he felt ready to challenge any established order.

ECONOMIC SITUATION

The most obvious deficiencies in the economic policy of Italian war, especially in Sicily, were exactly located in the American report the question of the shortage of workforce in rationing and the black market system.

From an intercepted letter in December 1942 from the province of Messina had come to know, for example, that the lack of peasants and laborers had left a large number of vacant land, just as he had left without maintenance many roads, especially land. Conversely, information from Stockholm had reported in the same month of 3,600,000 existing foreign workers in Germany at that time were 200,000 Italians, this does not seem to be much appreciated in the peninsula., So much so that "La Stampa" of December 24, 1942 spoke critically of "hundreds of thousands of agricultural workers and Italian industrial removed from the countryside and Italian factories." The most apparent consequence of this workforce shortage; illegal rise in real wages in Sicily and elsewhere, despite the government controls.

The rationing system was illegally ousted by the flowering of the black market, with a consequent rise in inflation and a growing unease of the poorer classes. Allied information sources in this regard were unanimous and in repeatedly report the popular complaint "*with the only rations you do not live,*" they were also able to provide some examples of the black market. Thus, the report stressed that a kilogram of beans cost 30 lira ... ie an amount equal to the daily wage of a skilled worker, a liter of olive oil 15 pounds even in Sicily, while in Rome it reached the 100 lire , and finally a kilogram of coffee was sold under the counter from 1,000 to 1,500 pounds -The government was clearly helpless in front of the black market phenomenon, despite increased penalties announced in this regard by the "Corriere della Sera" of 10 January 1943 .

The particular situation in Sicily, certainly better in regard to local agricultural products such as citrus fruits, wine and olives, however, exported in exorbitant quantities to Germany, was precarious especially in the cities as concerned wheat, because they had never arrived the promised loads of wheat and maize from the Danubian countries

Finally there were other limitations that, according to the report in question, it was not possible to escape: for example, the city gas worked in many centers for only five hours a day; the use of wheeled transport means, even public ones, was well controlled and even prohibited if existed the alternative iron-tramway transport; Finally it was prohibited the purchase of radio or spare parts from individuals.

GERMANS IN SICILY

The US report stated that, according to the British, the German soldiers present in Sicily at the beginning of 1943 belonged only to the flight crew of the Luftwaffe (about 480 aircraft), to the anti-aircraft artillery and Army contingents directed to Tunisia.

Numerous sources assured that incidents between Sicilian and German soldiers were frequent, mainly because of the relationship with the feminine element, and that the so-called 'German problem' had been the main motive of the Vidussoni trip to the island. However the report appropriately described as "exaggerated" the rumors of a real German dominion over Sicilia.

EFFECTS OF ALLIED BOMBING

Americans showed that the air strikes had damaged especially Palermo and Messina, without being heavy enough to cause real waves of panic. It was then considered possible that the effect of these raids had raised morale more than depressed it. Morale of the populations, as well as Fascist propaganda had exploited the death under bombardment of the Archbishop of Reggio Calabria and Monsignor Trappani, represented as martyrs of the ferocity of the non-Catholic Anglo-Saxon countries.

The most direct psychological reactions to the bombing appeared to be inspired more indignation than fear.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the US report that we are examining, they could drawn the following conclusions from the information

available on the Sicilian situation in February 1943.

1) Despite the hardships and hostility to the war, the Sicilians on the whole did not seem ready to revolt. Their discontent could possibly be exploited by the Allied Powers at the appropriate time, but it was a fact that in Sicily were of modest size its student and intellectual classes to those workers who, according to a British analysis, could be the most sensitive and ready an anti-fascist uprising. It could instead make much greater reliance on local anarchist groups.

2) There were certainly among the laborers and the Sicilians laborers reasons of indigence and suffering, which contrasted with the living conditions of the upper and of the German military classes.

3) It seemed certain that the Sicilians were completely demoralized and, while taking account of the propaganda, could be true the assertions of loyalty to the nation and patriotism on the part of the island's population. These feelings did not appear at the time can be depressed with the use of terror by Allied bombers and could instead be more successful Anglo-American appeal to safeguard local interests and pride of the people, relying on their vanity.

* * *

Between the Allied information assets immediately prior to the invasion of Sicily you can not forget the contribution of English Intelligence ULTRA and American Intelligence MAGIC, both listening systems and decryption of encrypted radio messages Italian, German and Japanese. In this regard we will not fail to report in the next few pages tell, when we talk about appreciation of the Axis enemy targets (chap. III, paragraph 1), an interesting summary of the American MAGIC on the same day of the landing, which was the own point, or the latest Italian-German case and also the state of preparation and morale of the defenders ⁽⁵²⁾.

Regarding in general the effectiveness and operation of the ULTRA British Intelligence very active and deadly for most of the war against especially the Italian Navy, yes refer to our recent volume ⁽⁵³⁾. Instead the operations of

(52) U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES, Washington D. C., Document S.R.S. 1021 10th July 1943. "Magic" summary n. 471.

(53) A. Santoni: *Il vero traditore: ti ruolo documentato di ULTRA nella guerra del Mediterraneo*, Milano 1981

this British information tool specifically during the Sicilian campaign it can be found in the third volume of the official history of British Intelligence published in 1987 ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

5. SOME REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF MAFIA AND OF EPARATISM

It is very controversial and perhaps destined to remain so the performance before and during the invasion of Sicily by the mafias and separatist, repeatedly called into question, although generically, even by American historiography ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

One of the strongest supporters of the support of the Mafia in the US Naval Intelligence is Massimo Ganci, who in one of his books has provided more than one example of the services rendered by "honor society" to the US Armed Forces, starting with the destruction by the gang of Frank Costello and the spy network of active sabotage in favor of the Germans in some ports of the US Atlantic coast in 1942 ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

Although it is difficult to quantify the real contribution of the Mafia to the Allied cause during the Sicilian campaign, it is almost certain that this aid had more propagandists and psychological effects than a direct impact on the actual military operations. This was also the view of Franco Bandini, which identifies in Lucky Luciano (aka Salvatore Lucania) and Don Calogero Vizzini the two ends of a loose chain of complicity between US and Sicily and speaking, besides, of two echelons of Sicilian - Americans officers sent in disguise in their land of origin between January and June 1943, with responsibility mainly of information ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

For the same purpose were clandestinely landed in Sicily in April 1943, British officers, including Col. Hancock, and they, along with the Italian-American Colonel Charles Paletti, had meetings with Lucia Tasca Bordonaro, with Arturo Verdigris and the Duchess of Cesarò ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

(54) F.H. Hinsley: *British Intelligence in the second world war*, H.M.S.O., vol 3

(55) See. Eg S.E. MORISON: *In guerra su due oceani*, op. Cit. pp 250-251

(56) S.M. GANCI: *L'Italia antimoderata*, Parma 1968, p / 365

(57) F. Bandini: *Vita e morte segreta di Mussolini*, op. Cit. pp 220-223

(58) V. SANSONE -G. Ingrasci: *Sei anni di banditismo in Sicilia*, Milano 1950, p. 47 and L. MERCURI: *Sicily La Sicilia e gli alleati*, in "Contemporary History", 1972, n. 3.

In another scholar of Sicily, Denis Mack Smith, it confirms that some support was provided by the Mafia to operation HUSKY, expressing the following judgment (59).

"It was often made the accusation and was never proved the contrary that this corresponded to a plan approved by the Allies to facilitate the conquest of Sicily. Certainly there were close relations between the gangsters of America and Sicily and the help of the Mafia could be very useful if only to get information. Some details of the career of Lucky Luciano and Nicky Gentile and other famous Italian-American criminals lend some credibility to this story. Vito Genovese, for example, though still wanted by US police in relation to many crimes including murder and although he had served fascism during the war! It turned out to be a strangely liaison officer of the American unit he used his position and his relationship with the local Mafia elements to help restore the authorities, partly unraveling so that little good that Mussolini had done. "

Measured is the judgment devoted to the same subject by Paolo Maltese, which identifies only in the American crime boss Vito Genovese more than likely support the work of the American Secret Services in Sicily ⁽⁶⁰⁾.

More categorical is the Pantaleone, that "*it is historically proven that before and during the military operations related to the Allied landing in Sicily, the Mafia, the agreement with the American gangsterism, labored to keep the way clear from sea to sea*" ⁽⁶¹⁾.

All sources seem to agree almost unanimously very active and appreciated by the Anglo-Americans the Sicilian separatist movement, headed by Andrea Finocchiaro Aprile and Lucia Tasca Bordonaro, then appointed Mayor of Palermo by the Allied Military Government. A confirmation of the resources of this isolate phenomenon was categorically expressed by Lord Rennell Rodd, British intelligence officer, an old friend of Finocchiaro Aprile and then military governor in Sicily. In response to concerns raised by Sir Thomas Inskip on the scope and efficiency of the Sicilian separatist movement Lord Rodd informed the Foreign Office the November 11, 1943 the separatist force and their political program and concluded prophetically warning that "*this movement is to listen to the beautiful*" ⁽⁶²⁾.

(59) D. MACK SMITH: *Storia della Sicilia medievale e moderna*, Bari 1970, p. 718

(60) P. MAITESE: *Lo sbarco in Sicilia*, Milano 1981, p. 139-140

(61) M. PANTALEONE: *Mafia e politica*, Torino 1962 pag.272

(62) P.R.O. property FO 371, 37328 folders: Sicily, situation in

In fact we know that at the time of their entry into Palermo, the Americans found themselves posted on the walls of the city the following significant manifesto, that they say show no contempt:

"Considering that the Sicilian people is ripe for new, more worthy and more high destinies and yearns for its freedom and its independence, the resolution by acclamation: the Sicilian people asked the Allied Governments to enable the establishment of a Provisional Government in order for Sicilians to establish and implement a plebiscite because they declare decayed in Sicily the Savoy monarchy in people of Vittorio Emanuele III and his successors, and Sicily is erected as an independent sovereign state in the republican regime " ⁽⁶³⁾.

Truly, the leaders of the separatist movement were numbered disproportionately on the support Anglo-American, to the point that insistently word circulated that Sicily would even become the 49th US state ⁽⁶⁴⁾.

Another group, the national character and not separatist meanwhile lent their work to accelerate and facilitate an Allied landing in Sicily. They were led by anti-fascist elements into hiding, including Pietro Ingrao, Franco Grasso, Mario Alicata and Elio Vittorini. Finally there was also a Communist underground youth nucleus as part of the Italian Armed Forces, which was situated in Colajanni, also he denounced: the Commander of the 6th Army, but was acquitted and moved to Rome for lack of evidence ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

The illusions of separatism vanished after February 1944, when Sicily was returned by the Allied military Administration to Italian authorities, a gesture that also poses end to dangerous disputes hegemony on the island that were developing more or less covertly among some British and American circles ⁽⁶⁶⁾.

(63) See. A. Finocchiaro April: *Il movimento indipendentista siciliano*, edited by S.M. GANCI, Palermo 1965, p. 2

(64) C.A. of GUALTIERI: *La questione siciliana*, "New Anthology", January 1947, p. 67

(65) P. MAITESE: *Lo sbarco in Sicilia*, op cit., P. 57

(66) On the Sicilian Mafia and separatism still exist numerous unpublished documents, kept in the American archives. Among them see. U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES, Washington D. C., Document O.S.S., C.I.D. 80725: Letter from Bernardo Mattarella to Lutgi Don Sturzo. 22nd June 1944; Document O.S.S., C.I.D. 80921: Separatist propaganda plans. 20th June 1944 Document O.S.S., C.I.D. 82105: Communist and separatist activities in Sicily. The Mafia. 11th June 1944 Document O.S.S., C.I.D. 96323: Vizzini and the Democratic Front of Order in Sicily. 19th September 1944 Document O.S.S., C.I.D. 100800: Mafia-Separatist infiltration in Christian-Democratic Party. 5th October 1944, Document O.S.S., C.I.D. 103136: Aldisio Finocchiaro April and fail to reach compromise. Separatism leaning towards federalism. 14th October 1944

The interference of the Mafia and separatism in the preparation and implementation of HUSKY the response in Sicily of episodic examples, but significant, the growing popular outrage against the German troops, especially when the latter is made responsible for abuses of all kinds. The hostility of the exasperated population, although they have not reached the continuity and the vertices that some would attribute to him, in some cases exploded with great violence, as in the town of Etna Mascalucia on 2 August 1943, on the eve of the liberation of Catania ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

Finally we must remember that the problem of the Mafia and separatism, framed in the political and socio-economic reality of Sicily, were dedicated by the British two long retrospective memorandum, although slightly after operation HUSKY, prepared for the Foreign Office and the War Office and signed by Captain WE Scotten. They were intended to explain the two phenomena in a rather simplistic, for the consumption of the new military government established by the Allies in Sicily ⁽⁶⁸⁾.

At the conclusion of the above, it can be argued that, while not exactly quantified, the contribution above all morale and psychological of the Mafia and the Sicilian separatism operation HUSKY was a fact, and the occasional anti-fascist and anti-Nazi resistance actions by the Sicilian population were undoubtedly determined by exigent circumstances, and did not respond -or at least failed to respond -a planned insurrection projects.

(67) See. F. Pezzino: *Contributo alla storia della Resistenza in Sicilia* " Cronache meridionali ", Naples, in February 1955.

(68) The first memorandum, entitled: "The problem of Mafia in Sicily. and dated October 29, 1943, is preserved in P.R.O. property FO 371, 37327 Folder: *Sicily*. Situation in. The second memo, titled "Memorandum Relating to political, social and economic forces in Sicily. and dated 10 December 1943, it is located in the bottom .. P.R.O WO 204, 2161 folder: War of 1939-1945. Papers Military Headquarters, Allied Force Headquarters, Italy and Sicily: political situation.

CHAPTER III

EVALUATIONS OF THE AXIS OF THE ENEMY'S OBJECTIVES

1. FORECAST OF ITALIAN – GERMAN HIGH COMMAND

According to Liddell Hart there were three factors that allowed the Anglo-Americans to successfully overcome the uncertainties and risks inherent in the invasion of Sicily: the proud conviction of Axis political leaders can hold out to the bitter end in the land of Tunisia, where the first successful Italian - Germanic containment measures had engendered dangerous illusions; then jealousy and fear fed by Mussolini to Hitler, which prevented the Germans to play a stronger role in the defense of the Italian territory, and finally the stubborn belief of the Führer that Sicily was not the closest of the Allies goal ⁽¹⁾.

As for the first assumption, the British military historian poses as the various rebellions in Berlin entreaties by Rommel himself for a prompt release of the Axis Army by the Tunisian trap and ready them for a transfer on the Mediterranean shore, the request that was not heard led to the separation from the additional operational duties of veterans divisions captured in Tunisia.

As proof of what was stated in his second point Liddell Hart recalls that the fear of Mussolini against his German ally did at first accept by the leader of only two of the five divisions that Hitler had offered in mid-May 1943 for the defense of the boot and the islands, only to have to rely on to the mouth of Gen. Ambrosio in mid-June further Germanic reinforcements,

(1) B.H. LIDDELL HART: *Stona militare della seconda guerra mondiale*, Milano 1970. pag.609.

even higher than those offered by the Führer, as we shall see later.

The last mistake of the Axis leaders, according to Liddell Hart, had Hitler as actor and consisted exclusively of the latter in the belief that the Allies would land rather in Sardinia or Greece, that, thanks to the effect of the well-known deception devised in early May 1943 by the British Secret Service and known to history with the name operation "MINCE-MEAT". As is known the British submarine *Seraph* set adrift off the coast of Huelva in Spain the corpse of a mysterious Major Martin of the Royal Marines, the alleged victim say a plane crash and possess specially forged documents, which allowed a glimpse of a next Allied amphibious operation in the Peloponnese or Sardinia.

Those false documents, seized like the corpse by the Spanish authorities, they came May 9, 1943, as expected and hoped for by the British into German hands, and the consequence was that on the 12th of the month the O.K.W. announced that "*measures concerning Sardinia and the Peloponnese had to take precedence over others*" ⁽²⁾. Therefore, it was ordained to the German 1st Armored division to move from France to Greece, 90th Light Div. to move to Sardinia and finally the 11th *Fliegerkorps* of Gen. Sruderit to bring two Paratroopers Div. into southern France to fend off a landing in the same Sardinia.

But remember that the basis of divergent and incorrect strategic views about the Axis of enemy intentions, which will now examine in more detail, were at that time the very same arguments debated for a long time by the Anglo - Americans General Staffs at the time of their design of plans of invasion. In fact, if Sicily could then appear as the ideal goal for the free passage of the allied fleets between the two basins of the Mediterranean, Sardinia and Corsica they accounted for more suitable stepping stones to amphibious operations along the Tyrrhenian coast of the peninsula and against Provence and ideal foundation for a massive air campaign on the northern Italian industries. Finally the invasion of Greece would allow

(2) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *Grand Strategy*. vol. IV cit., pag. .370 e HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V cit., pag. 37.

the Anglo-Americans to move on the side and behind the German deployment fronting the Red Army and would meet the existing and known English desire to drag Turkey into the war against the Axis.

Instead, what objectively was not sufficiently taken into account by the Italian-German General Staffs was a system methodical, conservative and not overly daring with which both the British and the Americans (not yet executors of the famous "frog jumps" in the Pacific Islands) they had operated until then. Indeed because of a deleterious, overestimation of the enemy genius -in that moment entirely unjustified - as well as an overestimation of the Anglo-American material resources, the board ended up attributing to the opponent exorbitant operational possibilities, and totally unrealistic. This certainly contributed to increase hugely in the cases of Rome and Berlin the range of possible enemy targets, resulting in a fatal indecision on a defensive level.

Underlying all this there was no doubt in a mediocre performance of the Axis Information Services and to just think about that yet July 4, 1943, six days of the transaction HUSKY, the German Secret Service deemed that simultaneous enemy landings were imminent in Sicily, Sardinia and Greece ⁽³⁾. But we see in succession interpretations of Italian - German General Staffs from the days of the fall of Tunisia.

On May 8, 1943 the Information Service of the Army G.S., with the memorandum. ZP/18002 in the appendix (appendix no. 1) denied the possibility of an Anglo-American landing in the Balkans in support of the Soviet Union and, while considering that an action amphibious enemy was then only possible in the western Mediterranean basin, discarded Spaniards targets for unfavorable political-military consequences that would befall on allies in the event of their day invasion of those territories. Therefore, remained in play any landings in Provence or on the large Italian islands and, starting from the false premise of the necessary complementarity between these two enemy hypothesis, the G.S. of the Army concluded seeing in Sardinia and Corsica in the most likely areas of invasion. These conclusions now take on greater significance

(3) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op. cit., pag. 29,

if you think they preceeded outcome of the famous English diversionary ploy entrusted to the body of the self-styled Major Martin, whose forged documents did not fall into the hands of the Axis until the following day, May 9.

The above inaccurate forecasts were soon shared with both the Supermarina in a meeting on May 12 between the Admirals Riccardi, Sansonetti and Donitz, and by the Supreme Command, when on May 23 announced the General Staffs of the three Armed Forces who were to be feared between 1 and 6 June enemy landing against "the Sardinia, Corsica and the French Mediterranean coast" and only subsequent actions against Pantelleria and Lampedusa⁽⁴⁾.

Five days later the same Supreme Command insisted it had "strong information the next attempt of the enemy landing in Sardinia, with the likelihood that such an effort is not separated from another against Corsica, carried out simultaneously or out of phase in time"⁽⁵⁾.

Indecision about the Anglo-American goal was indeed confirmed in two meeting dated 27 May between Gen. Ambrosio and the Chiefs of the G.S. of the three Armed Forces and among Ambrosio, Kesselring and von Rintelen that was taken seriously the hypothesis "55," ie, that of a simultaneous landing in Sicily and Sardinia, and at the same time the threat to Corsica, Pantelleria and Lampedusa⁽⁶⁾.

That the latter two small islands of Sicily channel would probably become the object of a next opponent attack it was confirmed by Supermarina on May 30, following the detected transfer of a large number of landing vehicles by the Allies at Bisena and at Susa, and the increasingly fiercer campaign of aerial bombardments on them⁽⁷⁾.

The same May 30, however, the Supreme Command returned to talk of danger to Sardinia, Superesercito ordered

(4) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: telegrams 13253/13254 and op / op of 23 May 1943, issued by the Supreme Command.

(5) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder; Telegram 13418 / op May 28, 1943, issued by the Supreme Command

(6) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder; Meeting at Palazzo Vidoni, headquarters of the Supreme Command of 24 May 1943

(7) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder; "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", on May 30, 1943, pp. 6-4

the urgent transfer there of the "Nimbus" paratroopers division, a movement to that effect the G.S. of the Army carried out on June 16 ⁽⁸⁾.

The influx of reinforcements in Sardinia was also one of the main topics discussed on June 13 in a new meeting at Palazzo Vidoni from Ambrosio, Kesselring, von Richthofen and von Rintelen, and the next day the Supreme Command could inform Superesercito that O.K.W. would have awarded five new fortress battalions to Sardinia and only two to Sicily ⁽⁹⁾.

Meanwhile on June 10, in order to coordinate the use of all Italian-German means of air and sea reconnaissance it had been constituted by the Supreme Command a "Committee for the strategic exploration", located in the basement of the Supermarina at Santa Rosa on the via Cassia, and composed of senior officers of the Royal Navy, the Air Force and German OBS ⁽¹⁰⁾. The new body, however, did not seem to be able to shed light on the confusing strategic predictions, so much so that, while the Royal Navy on 13 and 17 June estimated decreasing the danger of invasion of Sardinia, especially following the recent jobs enemy of Pantelleria and Lampedusa, the Supreme Command still insisted on the 19th of the month on "imminence of the enemy landing action against Sardinia" ⁽¹¹⁾.

Neither the British occupation of Pantelleria and Lampedusa, nor found varying degrees of contemporary aerial bombing on Sicily and Sardinia were therefore considered sufficiently indicative elements. In fact, even on June 18, in his "appreciation of the situation" on that date, the Supreme Command judged that the more aggressive enemy on the Sicilian bases pursuing the sole purpose of lightening the eventual Italian contrast in the Sicilian Channel, critical precondition for landing on the one as on the other of the two major islands. To confuse

(8) A.U.S., folder 1444: Telegram 13476/op of 30 May and the Supreme Command: dispatch 18801 of June 16 of the G.S. Army.

(9) A.U.S.E., folder 1444 folder: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", on June 13, 1943, p. 12 telegram and 13897/op of the June 14 Supreme Command.

(10) The O.B.S., That the German South Front Command, was commanded by Gen. Kesselring. On this occasion it should be noted that von Rintelen was the German military attaché in Rome and von Richthofen the commander of the second *Luftflotte*.

(11) A.U.S.E., folder 1444: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", the day June 19, 1943, p. 12 and telegram of the Supreme Command 14111 / op of June 19, 1943, Folder 1498: News of the Supermarina No. 1090 of June 17, 1943.

ideas and to make more and more vague conclusions, then stated that, although they can not rule out invasion of the Italian islands, however, was to be considered at that time, "*most likely an attack in Provence or in the Balkans, because the Provence is a serious aerial threat to Germany and the Balkans threatens Romania oil; these purposes are truly profitable.*"⁽¹²⁾.

As we see, in just three weeks since the invasion of Sicily, the Italian Supreme Command was aligning itself on the same German positions, in turn, partly influenced by the outcome of the well-known English MINCEMEAT ploy. Yet they were then available sufficient other information to doubt least of these convictions. In fact just that on June 18 had come to Rome from Lisbon the precious news that "allied forces amounting to a total of 85,000 men would have landed in Trapani, Marsala, Agrigento, Licata, Gela and Pozzallo"; But this event, which meant the Anglo-American original plan for HUSKY, was not duly taken into account⁽¹³⁾.

Even more outspoken in his belief was wrong indeed Gen. Ambrosio on June 22, when in an interview with von Rintelen expressed himself thus:

"As to the probable intentions of the enemy, the recent closure of the Syrian border suggests that they want to attack in the Aegean"⁽¹⁴⁾.

On June 23, was spotted in the western Mediterranean an increase in incoming enemy forces from Gibraltar, an event that led Supermarina predict how next the beginning of a great operating cycle, but without specifying the location⁽¹⁵⁾. One prediction was rather tempted again by the Supreme Command, which intended to supplement the said general appreciation of the Royal Navy and judged that "*equally likely*" that the enemy effort could "*be directed against Sardinia or against both Sardinia and against Sicily*".⁽¹⁶⁾

On the question concerning the next Mediterranean objectives

(12) A. U.S.E., 1444 folder: "Appreciation of the situation at the date of 18 June 1943".

(13) H. POND: *Sicilia* op. cit. , P. 32.33.

(14) A.U.S.E., folder. 1498 and annexed in 1193, "Minutes of the meeting of 22 June"

(15) A.U.S.E., 1498 Folder: News of Supermarina n. 1097

(16) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: " Diario Storico del Comando Supremo", day June 23, 1943, p. 4.

Anglo American were involved even the Japanese during an meeting held on June 25 in Palazzo Venezia between Mussolini, Ambrosio, Gen. Schimitzu and Adm. Abe. A denial of the other rumor that the leader had only then clear ideas on the subject, there is a record of the meeting, in which explicitly the head of government pointed globally in Sardinia, Sicily, Greece and the Dodecanese the immediate objectives of the enemy, adding that penetration would occur if it was clearly evident the smaller Axis resistance. More realistic instead appeared in that circumstance Gen. Schimitzu, that at least thought to exclude from the long and confusing list an Allied landing in eastern Mediterranean basin.⁽¹⁷⁾

-For its part the Supermarina, after admitting on 26 and 27 June that it was not "*yet possible to establish the direction of the main enemy effort*", finally took over for the first time on the 30th of the month (to ten days from the operation HUSKY) that the deployment of resources from the Anglo-American landing was aimed "*primarily against Sicily, to allow the attack at any time*".⁽¹⁸⁾

This warning, which seemed destined to wipe out any further speculation on the immediate objectives. enemies, however, was not considered sufficient by the Supreme Command, evidently in possession of other information, it saw fit to send on July 1st to General von Rintelen the following message n. 23207/op⁽¹⁹⁾.

"The news that continues to be received about the shift of resources from enemy landing in the western basin of the Mediterranean to the east are also likely to feel like an attempt to land on the western coast of Greece. So please expedite the dispatch to the island of Kefalonia of these intended German forces. "

Increasingly the identification of future Anglo-American moves was mainly dedicated on July 2 a large meeting at Palazzo Vidoni, headquarters of the Supreme Command, which also aimed to examine the functionality of the recent Committee for strategic reconnaissance⁽²⁰⁾. In this crucial conference, held at a

(17) A.U.S.E., 1498 folder, annexed in 1344, "Notes on the interview held in Palazzo Venezia June 25, 1943"

(18) A.U.S.E., 1499 folder, attachments 1410 and 1560: News of Supermarina nn. 1101 and 1104.

(19) A.U.S.E., folder 1500, Annex 20: the Supreme Command Telegram n. 23207 / op of 1 July 1943.

(20) A.U.S.E., folder 1500, Annex 80: "Minutes of the meeting on 2 July 1943 at Palazzo Vidoni".

the week beginning - the invasion of Sicily, the views were summarized as follows. Gen. Ambrosio was finally decided as to indicate in Sicily, as the main enemy objective taking into account both the intensified bombing on the island, and taken from the deployment of Anglo-American landing units. According Kesselring and Sansonetti (Deputy Chief of the Navy G.S.) instead latter could still focus on Sardinia sailing from Bizerte. Finally Roatta (Army Chief of Staff) certainly not helped to clarify the doubts when he suggested, in addition to a main assault on Sicily, a contemporary demonstrative action against Sardinia and an episode of enemy 'swift' element against Central Italy .

Another demonstration of the confusion of ideas to predict the Anglo-American intentions in the days immediately preceding the invasion of Sicily, there is provided by an internal memo of the Supreme Command, dated July 3 and in which one reads, among other things, the following significant arguments ⁽²¹⁾.

"While the Committee for strategic reconnaissance emanates serially an appreciation that has an indicative value for the feedback that V.E. is contingent on the situation, it is not out of place to expand the ideas to a greater visual reasoning.

We have long supported the idea that it is less likely the attack on the Italian islands for the attack against the Balkan Peninsula. This belief remains in us even now, months later, unaffected and despite appearances ...

The overwhelming superiority of means allowing the enemy any operation, even one or ones that are commonly considered daring ... Firm in the concept that the conquest of Sicily and Sardinia is for the enemy burdensome business and very profitable, we see the most likely:

or a direct attack on the Tyrrhenian coast of the Italian peninsula after demonstrative action against the islands but commitments validly our air and naval forces;

or an attack on the Ionian and Adriatic coasts of the Italian peninsula to conquer the base of Taranto (and for free passage from the Strait of Otranto) concomitant with the decisive action in the Balkans. This direct action against Ionian Adriatic coast and *even after*, neutralization of the airfields of Sicily and Sardinia and the Salento peninsula, or after landing in eastern Sicily ... The attack on Sicily and Sardinia will not be a diversion compared to the main attack, which will instead be launched on the Italian mainland or the Balkans."

(21) A.U.S.E., folder 012: Internal Memo of the Supreme Command of the 3 July 1943.

* * *

The serious indecision which reigned then in Italian commands about future moves enemy was further exacerbated by the Anglo-American awareness of this confusion, thanks to the efficient cryptographic service of the Allies.

This time it emphasized not the British ULTRA, but the parallel American MAGIC, which in Daily Summary of July 10 n. 471, as reported ⁽²²⁾:

"A report of 2 July from the Japanese Ambassador in Rome includes the following considerations.

A) There are many indications that the Anglo-American plan to land somewhere in the near future. Since the end of June the British and the Americans are gathering large naval rates in Gibraltar and are transferring them gradually towards the east. At the same time they are moving transport for the landing from the west towards the central Mediterranean and seems to be doing great preparations in Tunis, Sfax, Tripoli and Misrata, and even more to the east up to Benghazi. It has recently been noted that four hospital ships and two monitors have appeared in Gibraltar.

B) At the same time air raids they have become very strong on Sicily, Sardinia and the press area ... or Reggio Calabria. Even Naples, Livorno and La Spezia were attacked. It has been estimated that every day an average of eleven Italian and German planes are shot down in Italy and other significant losses that occur to aircraft from other causes.

C) In general it is believed that the landings will be made in Sicily and Sardinia. There is irrefutable evidence that efforts are made to disrupt communications and supply lines in these areas.

D) However it is thought that a landing on the Italian peninsula should be regarded as possible and there are those who believe that they can be simultaneous military operations against Crete, the Peloponnese and Albania. It was noted that the means by enemy land is being transferred from the east towards Tobruk. The locations of Axis troops is done day accordingly.

E) In general there is considerable confidence in defenses on the Italian peninsula, but this is not true on the other hand with regard to Sicily and Sardinia. Even Sicily does not have reliable sea lines of communication and it is expected that if it will be overrun will occur difficulties in the supply of water and food. The main weakness of Sardinia lies in its long lines of communication by sea. However there are numerous Italian-German troops both in Sicily and in Sardinia and, since the Italian Army will fight to defend the soil of the homeland, will not be an easy task to land:

F) With regard to the overall war situation there are many who in Italy and especially in Rome look to the future with concern. In the provinces instead it applies different atmosphere and people are unexpectedly resolute."

(22) U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES. Washington D.C., S.R.S. document 1021: report of the Assistant Chief of G.S. the War Department of the July 10, 1943, titled "*Magic*" summary n. 471.

* * *

Returning to the Italian predictions on future Allied moves, it must be said that even on July 5, four-five days from the launch of HUSKY, there was a different interpretation on the same strategic elements between Supermarina and the Supreme Command. Indeed, while the body of naval leadership confirmed with its announcement in 1109 the first suspicions of June 30 on the possibility of an attack on Sicily "*at any time*", the Supreme Command with 41765/op report, concerning the "*appreciation of the situation the Committee for maritime reconnaissance beyond the July 5*", concluded that "*by all the enemies movements observed were not any grounds for believing imminent landing operations*" ⁽²³⁾.

It then had to reach on July 6, three-four days since the invasion, to read clearly on both the news of Supermarina n. 1110, both the press 41778/op of the Supreme Command that the enemy had. "*I started an operating cycle against Sicily*" ⁽²⁴⁾.

The next day, July 7, Supreme Command thus imparted with tele n. 14634/op general directives, for "*defense against hostile attacks*" ⁽²⁵⁾. In them, it noted the systems adopted previously by the Anglo-Americans, it remembered that enemy action would be directed at first to disorganize deep defense, communications services and connections, even with the use of paratroopers and *Commandos*. More surprisingly, however, warned "*not impossible to expect the Air Force with regard to collaboration in the tactical field*". In fact, according to these directives, perhaps air already acted "*with wide, generous comradeship, to limit the possibilities*" and he had not "*ask for their intervention for unsuitable tasks, which can and should be carried out by land or naval forces.*" The guidelines then ended recalling that "*a dismal failure of the first strong attack (enemy) on Europe could have a decisive influence on the fate of the war.*"

(23) A.U.S.E. Folder 1500, annex 178: News of the Supermarina n. 11:09; Annex 206: dispatch of the Supreme Command No. 41765/op of 5 July 1943.

(24) *Ibid*, Annex 225: News of the Supermarina n. 1110; folder 255: dispatch of the Supreme Command No. 41778/op of July 6, 1943.

(25). A.U.S.E. Folder 1501, annex 307: the Supreme Command tele n. 14634/op of July 7, 1943

Unfortunately, after finally although belatedly it indicated Sicily as the Anglo-American goal, Italians governing bodies were misled about the timing of the landing from the bad sea conditions detected on July 8. It is in fact from 19:30 that day, twenty-seven hours from the launch of the first British paratroopers, the dispatch 41794/op of the Supreme Command contains the usual "*appreciation of the situation of the Committee for the maritime reconnaissance on July 8*, "which we consider appropriate to report in full below ⁽²⁶⁾.

"Conditions are not favorable to the sea landings. Partially obstructs the visibility reconnaissance. Supply convoys are moving along the coasts of French North Africa and Cyrenaica, One of the latter including cargo transport seems directed to Tripoli or to Malta. No direct news of the main naval forces of the enemy; But the r. t. intercepts suggest that the Command-in-Chief of the Force 'H' is in Algiers. Continue action against aviation Sicily as hampered by the weather. These conditions of time suggest that the beginning of the landing operations can not be imminent."

During the night of July 9, which would see the launch of Allied paratroopers and the come of invading convoys before the Sicilian beaches, the Supreme Command he circulated among two other important appreciations. The first, the hours 19:40, the extended no. 41811/op and consists in the usual "*appreciation of the situation of the Committee for the maritime reconnaissance of 9 July*." The text reads ⁽²⁷⁾:

"Weather still very perturbed, unfavorable for landing operations. An examination of the evidence gathered is no data that changes the situation, intense Continue the movement of convoys, of which, however, the survey did not provide sufficient information to determine the characteristics. Despite the scarcity of elements of judgment it is believed that began operations is not imminent especially depending on the weather conditions."

The second and later release of those decisive hours bears no. 1586/IRP and was addressed by the Supreme Command to Superesercito, Supermarina Superaereo and O.B.S, at 23rd 10 of that fateful July 9th. When already the first British paratroopers had landed. In it, after "clear" defining the beginning of an attempt

(26) A.U.S.E. Folder 1501, annex 376: dispatch of the Supreme Command No. 41794/op 8 July 1943.

(27) *Ibid*, Annex 427: the Supreme Command message n. 41811 / op July 9, 1943.

the enemy landing in Sicily, it come to insist that it was not to be excluded "*a similar action on Sardinia*" ⁽²⁸⁾.

With this knowledge and instructions the Italian Armed Forces were about to face the latest in a long series of historical invasions of our country.

2. MEETINGS AND MEASURES RELATING TO SICILY FROM MARCH TO May 1943

On March 27, 1943, General Mario Roatta, then commander of the 6th Army in Sicily, addressed to the two subordinate Corps - the XII of General Mario Arisio and the XVI of General Carlo Rossi- memorandum n. 55 that we have reproduced in the Appendix for detailed examination (Appendix no. 2) ⁽²⁹⁾.

-In this document it was remembered, among other things, that if the enemy had landed in Sicily, he was seeking employment in western cusp or the south east of the island, with likely additional landings in the areas of Agrigento, Palermo and Messina. However, it not supposed to be neglected the possibility of simultaneous invasion of Sardinia, in which case the most threatened area would have been to Sicily between Sciacca and Palermo.

In all the above eventualities land defense it would have to rely initially only on existing resources in Sicily and, after a few days, could have been bolstered by reinforcements from the peninsula. It was also expected that part of the Royal Navy would be deployed against convoys and enemy supplies and support to our maritime traffic, while R. Air Force, in addition to also performing directly supported offensive "indirect" terrestrial operations each case had to predict a general qualitative inferiority, although not quantitative, against the enemy.

General Roatta then passed to the actual directives

(28) *Ibid*, Annex 414: the Supreme Command message n. 1586/IRP of 9 July 1943.

(29) A.U.S.E., 1234 folder: memorandum n. 55 of 27 March 1943. The Command of the 6th Army had been stationed in Sicily in the fall of 1941 and took on the most appropriate designation of FF.AA. Command Sicily "precisely as of March 1943. The two dependant Army Corps were separated by a vertical line ideal that ran roughly from the mouth of the river to the east of Pollina to the Cefalu beaches to the east of Licata. We should also remember that Pantelleria and the Pelagie islands did not depend on this command, but directly by the General Staff of the Royal Navy

operating in relation to these different scenarios of invasion from the sea. A common feature for all eventualities was the defense and anchored to the bitter end by coastal unit, the protection of the twelve local airports by the appropriate units and adaptation to the circumstances of the so-called mobile and tactical groups of maneuver. In any eventuality it was correct in finding indispensable intervention of a sudden maneuver units and then their "*intellectual and material readiness*" to keep updated during the exercises.

To the defense of Sicily by a future invasion, though reputed then, as we know, only possible, it was dedicated to the highest level meeting on 2 May next at the Supreme Command, which at that time is also concerned with the defense of Sardinia by a equally hypothetical invasion. Even the minutes of this meeting is reproduced in the Appendixes to make possible a more detailed examination (Appendix no. 3) ⁽³⁰⁾.

Here it is necessary to recall that on that occasion the General Roatta thought the western tip of the island the most likely target of a future enemy landing, with the area between Gela and Catania as a secondary objective. The commander of the 6th Army then lamented the shortage of armored units, artillery, say maritime transport, cement and labor for the construction of defense installations ⁽³¹⁾. He then stressed the effectiveness and adaptability of the new means by enemy landing, which can carry armored vehicles and artillery directly on beaches without the need for docks and port facilities.

Then considered impossible a preliminary identification of the exact areas of a landing future and therefore considered highly probable that the invaders were able to establish a beachhead, Roatta saw in the work of advanced barriers and maneuver units as the decisive cards for defenders, If instead of the

(30) A.U, S.E., 1497 folder: "Minutes of the meeting of May 2, 1943 at Palazzo Vidoni".

(31) The cement shortage for the implementation of the fixed defenses was particularly felt, since the assignment of that building material remained far below the 80,000 tons necessary, just touching the 7,000 tons per month between March and June 1943. The latter share was even lower than the monthly production of cement in Sicily, which, however, was directed elsewhere. See. E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, Rome 1956, p. 46. Another hot issue remained unsolved for its complexity, was the displacement of the Sicilian coastal population (about two million souls), which was requested by Rome in March, but that could only be implemented with the local availability of sufficient as transportation, housing and infrastructure virtually impossible to find.

mobile forces had not been able to contain and repel the invaders into the sea, it would not stay more than relying on an internal stop in front of "*waiting for favorable scenario*" for a counterattack in style.

For his part, the Chief of the G.S. of the Royal Navy, Adm. Riccardi, considered at that meeting that the enemy would not intervene with battleships, but would protect its convoys between Tunisia and Sicily with only destroyers. Nevertheless, he did not consider possible "Employment of our battleships against enemy destroyers in a completely enemy dominated aviation area and since generally ended up excluded then every "*naval contrast with surface vessels*."

Then the objection of General Ambrosio if it were not the case to consider the hypothesis of a naval attack on the enemy maritime supply lines, Admiral Riccardi merely postpone any decision about the future? in relation to the situation that would be created ⁽³²⁾.

Finally the Chief of the G.S. of the Air Force Gen. Fougier, after having considered unlikely the invasion of Sicily because of the threat exercised by the enemy of aviation based in Sardinia; He called it "*remarkable*" and "*substantial*" our air forces in charge of the defense of Sicily and, bluntly, thought it possible to "*counter the landing effectively*" ⁽³³⁾.

After this important meeting on 2 May at the Supreme Command, Gen. Ambrosio went the 17th of the month to the Palazzo Venezia where, in the presence of Mussolini, had a meeting with Marshal Kesselring, commander of the German South Front

(32) Even the Germans did this in those days by the mouth of von Rintelen the conviction of the new Chief of the Kriegsmarine, Adm. Doenitz, about the need to "fight the enemy naval threat on the high seas and on Italian islands" See. Letter to von Rintelen Ambrosio of 14 May 1943 on A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", the day May 14, 1943 , p. 10.

Most brutal was Col. von. Bonin, who returned from Tunisia and who later became Chief of Staff of the XIV Corps of the Panzer Army in Sicily, who in his "Considerations on the Italian campaign 1943- 1944" stated that at that time "the Allies already had air mastery and, if the Italian fleet had to be judged for what it was worth, they were also the masters of the sea" See. A.U.S.E., 2266 folder.

(33) This may be too categorical and risky opinion, then brutally denied by him, has left dumbfounded General Santoro, author of history! "Italian Air Force in World War II, which has even assumed an error on the part of the secretary of the meeting, in charge of drawing up the relevant minutes. See. G SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II, Rome, 1957, p. 548.

(O.B.S.) and von Rintelen, the German military attaché in Rome. Purpose of the meeting was the involvement of the German Armed Forces in the defense of Sicily after the recent epilogue of the Tunisian campaign ⁽³⁴⁾. In particular, it was discussed moving on the island of heavy tanks like the *'Tiger'*, the German airfields, the anti-landing defense by supplying mines and wire tapped, the concentration of many enemy vessels in the port of Djidjelli, the meeting in Calabria of the "*Hermann Goering*" division to be transferred then to Sicily and then the enemy can attack from Malta ⁽³⁵⁾.

In this latter regard on May 24 the Supreme Command ordered that day the Superaereo prepare, in accordance with the O.B.S., Raids on Malta with the task of countering any enemies preparations for invasion ⁽³⁶⁾.

The hoped-German major commitment to the defense of Sicily, in view of an invasion that place obviously represented primary hypothesis, while Rome was still a possibility among many, was not slow to materialize, as we shall see later. Since May 2 the fact Gen. Roatta informed the G.S.R.E. that the division "*Sizilien*" (which later became the reconstituted 15 *Panzer Grenadier*) was forming on the island "*with the units already in transit to Tunisia or parked, appropriately grouped and reinforced.*" We must not forget that for some time there was the Command of the island. Fliegerkorps II (CAT II) which also carries out direction and the ground organization of the German Armed Forces allocate to the airports and those engaged in the anti-aircraft (Flak) defense ⁽³⁷⁾.

3. CHANGE IN COMMAND AND THE ARRIVAL OF GENERAL GUZZONI IN SICILY

On May 30, General Roatta was replaced by General Alfredo Guzzoni in the Command of the 6th Army and the Armed Forces

(34) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command" meeting of May 17, 1943 at Palazzo Venezia.

(35) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder; annexed n. 1221.

(36) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: dispatch of the Supreme Command No. 50948 of May 24, 1943.

(37) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder: "Diary Historical Military Command of the 6th Army", Annex 62: 10642 Post op of 21 May 1943.

of Sicily, according to the choices made in Rome on the 25th of the month and that Roatta was elevated to the position of Chief of the Army G.S.⁽³⁸⁾ Gen. Guzzoni brought with him to the Enna headquarters Colonel Emilio Faldella as his Chief of S.M., and both began to study the situation of the Island, of which he never before had a direct interest.⁽³⁹⁾

According to some authors, determining the change of leadership of the Armed Forces in Sicily contributed greatly to the resentment among the island's population had aroused expression deemed it offensive and contained in a proclamation of Roatta dated 5-9 May 1943⁽⁴⁰⁾.

We refuse to attribute a decisive influence in such provincialism, but at any rate we reproduce below the full text of the manifesto, pointing out, however, that in light of the rules on punctuation does not seem acceptable susceptibility which was interpreted then the final distinction among the "*proud Sicilian*" and "Italian and German military" reason for the exaggerated controversy⁽⁴¹⁾.

"Sicilians!

The FF.AA Sicily, largely composed of your fellow citizens, I am here among you to defend your island, the bastion of Italy.

All of you - I'm sure - will accompany the work of the "Armed Forces Sicily":

- Maintaining, in any contingency, calm and unshakable faith in the destiny of the Fatherland;
- Willingly and obediently applying to the provisions of the military authorities;
- Waiting with constant vigor to your ordinary work, and the one to which

(38) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder, dispatch of S.M.R.E. n. 16951 of May 30, 1943.

(39) G. ZANUSSI: *Guerra e catastrofe dell'Italia*, Rome, 1945-1946, vol. I, p. 327. Gen. Guzzoni had commanded the Expeditionary Force in Albania in April 1939 and the 4th Army on the Western Front in the brief campaign against France in June 1940.

From 29 November the same year he became Deputy Chief of the G.S. General, a post from which he resigned from public life in May 1941, retiring.

Col. Faldella, which will be promoted in July 1943 Brigadier General, was commander of the 3rd Alpini Regiment and Gemanasca Pellice sector, reporting directly to the 4th Army of Guzzoni, and had gone then, in August 1941, the S.M.R.E.

(40) A.U.S.E., folder 2124 / B, Document 135: "Proclamation of General Roatta .., Military Post 5-9 May 1943.

(41) See. Also M. ROATTA: *Otto milioni di baionette*, Milano, 1946. pp. 251-252

you will be called to further strengthen the island's defense;
- enlisting and - if it will be necessary - fighting - in the "CENTURIES VOLUNTEERS
VESPERS of upcoming constitution.

Strictly, confidently and fraternally united, you, proud Sicilians, and we, Italian and
German military of "Armed Forces Sicily, "will prove to the that *he will not pass here*"

In assuming his new post, recalling him to active service, the General Guzzoni issued
on same May 30 the following order of the day:

"Officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers!

I assume from now the Command of the Armed Forces of Sicily. I offer my respectful
homage to the glorious flags, banners and Labari of the Army, the Royal Navy, the Air Force,
the M.V.S.N. affectionately I greet the units ready to renew their glorious deeds, or to emulate
in value the units that already had the honor of fighting.

I likewise greet the units of the Germanic Armed Forces united with us in the defense of
this very Italian land.

My confidence in you all the time is equal solemnity. In your name and mine I extend a
grateful greeting and good wishes to Excellency Roatta, who so intense activity carried out for
strengthening the defense of this island, which is entrusted to your value and we will defend
with firm faith and unshakable will. The Commanding General Alfredo Guzzoni" ⁽⁴²⁾.

Guzzoni had just arrived in Sicily on June 2 the Head Prefect, Special Civilian
Commissioner, published its own ordinance elevating the daily wages of the local
agricultural workers and that stated that the new tariffs could not be exceeded under any
circumstances and had to be also "*applied in the*" island to a private nature works, utilities or
military workers of any category" ⁽⁴³⁾. Two days later it was then published in the "*Journal of
the Kingdom*," the decree of militarization of the Sicilian territory, resulting in the transfer of
all powers to the military command ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

(42) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder, attachment 83.

(43) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder, attachment 94. The Commissioner of Civil, appointed this with R.D. March 23,
1943, had been made available to the Armed Forces Command Sicily to adjust the military authority
relations with the nine prefects and also to hold the island's economy. See. G. Zingali: *L'invasione
della Sicilia*, Catania 1962, pp. 27-28.

(44) S. ATTANASIO: *Sicilia senza Italia, luglio-agosto*, 1943, Milano 1976, p. 40. With the announcement
189, in Mussolini's signature, was militarized on that day not only the Sicilian railway staff, but also
that of Sardinia. See, A. U. S. E., 1444. folder

If, however, with the latter measures it could be at least partially solved the problem known in the retrieval of the workforce for creation of new defense installations, remained unresolved parallel to the other question of the greater availability of maritime transport for the transport of construction materials. In this connection on June 8 Guzzoni lamented the inadequacy of vessels. made available to the 6th Army to the influx of those 8,000 daily tons of materials deemed as a minimum, and complained that none of the two hundred motor-sailing vessels, already destined by the Supreme Command to the Sicilian needs, had yet arrived at the island. He concluded bitterly that "*in various ports are not working for lack of steamers and motor-sailing vessels*" and that in those conditions the situation of supplies for Sicily worsened "*more and more in a very alarming way*" ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

For its part the General Staff of R. Marina precisely in those days, exactly on June 7, the Supreme Command had sent a memorandum by which, with respect to the hypothesis "55" made on May 27 (simultaneous enemy attack against the both large Italian islands), did not consider it possible for the moment to divert boat traffic from Sardinia in favor of what to Sicily. For the same reason the planned transport of these last island of the German division "H. Goering" would take a longer time ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

General Guzzoni not so long in coming across with the sad local situation, but not lose heart and tried to make himself personally acquainted with the situation both of the military and of the island's civilians making between 7 and 9 June an inspection in the sectors of Enna -Messina- Catania, from the report of this mission, however, reveals a disturbing and unfortunately frequent phenomenon; the tendency of the subordinate Commands to submit dysfunction as mild, temporary and remediable, because of a misunderstanding pride and spirit of the Body ⁽⁴⁷⁾. On June 7 Indeed, according to the aforementioned report, the tactical group

(45) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder attachment 127: paintings by Command FF.AA of Sicily n. 13798 8 June 1943. Yet 27 of the month Guzzoni lament that instead of the planned 8,000 tons of supplies daily, we arrived in Sicily every day not more than 2,000-3,000. *Ibid* attachment 363: tele n. 35408 of 27 June 1943 directed the Navy Command of Sicily and to the Intendenza FF.AA. of Sicily.

(46) A U.S.E., 1444 folder memo of the Navy G.S. n. 9282/T of 7 June 1943

(47) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder attachment 129: Report on the visit of Excellency Guzzoni to Enna - Messina - Catania area on days of 7, 8, 9 June 1973

of Major Franzini of Lingfield did not report more than "*a moral high despite the quota is almost entirely Sicilian, great enthusiasm and strong sense of duty.*" So much it had to be actually the enthusiasm found in the fact that Guzzoni bestowed to the Battle Group a prize of 2,000 pounds.

In Messina also the Federale Bosco and Quaestor Buccarelli reported on June 8, "*the calm and serene spirit of the population despite frequent air raids.*", While the Lt.. Col. D'Amico and the Consul Bassanese, commanders respectively of 116th Calabrian coastal regiment in the sector and the tactical group of Gambarie, assured Guzzoni of "good" spirit of the "favorable" efficiency of their troops, and defining finally "right" equipment and objects of inventory.

In the same city of the Strait Col. Marzà, commander of the 119th regiment of the Sicilian coastal sector of the fort, showed himself "happy with their men" who worked "with alacrity" Only Major Piga, chief of the Intendenza Command M.M. Autonomous Sicily, denounced dysfunction, indicating that 1,600 freight cars loaded with war materials and provisions were "*still in the Calabria railway area because of the interruption of the ferry service*" - But he predicted that those cars were unloaded and that the material would be transported as soon as possible with unspecified watercraft.

In the afternoon of 8 June Guzzoni he completed his tour in the southern part of the fort of Messina, getting the impression that, apart from the passive antitank defense, the rest of the defensive organization was "satisfactory: and bestowing a prize of 200 lire to the soldiers the two positions of Ali Marina.

The commander of the Armed Forces Sicily concluded his inspection tour by visiting on June 9 Catania, whose complex defensive structure was definitely defined "very good." The mission report also informs us that "*the deployment recently taken by mobile divisions Naples and Livorno gives a guarantee of solid and safe defense of such a delicate area which is the plain of Catania*", while Guzzoni himself said in closing to the assembled officers that the "*available means must be considered sufficient for the defense.*"

This revealed official optimism was still fully-reversed by Guzzoni on 13 and 14 June, when he reported

both to the Supreme Command and to the G.S.R.E. the following impressions:

"Overall defensive situation inadequate for front of enemy offense means. Land mobile forces & reactive capabilities of our aviation insufficient. Population spirit depressed. I consider necessary another German armored division and an Italian motorized division above to strengthening the aviation. I myself in order to strengthen materially, the defensive spirit & to create a united front the armed forces, party hierarchy, population. Guzzoni" ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

4. THE LATEST FORECASTS AND PROVISIONS ON THE ISLAND

On the morning of June 9, 1943 Col. Faldella, Chief of G.S. of Guzzoni, had a long talk with Col. Heckel, Chief of G.S. of the 15th *Panzergrénadier* Division "Sizilien"⁽⁴⁹⁾. On this occasion, the German superior officer exposed enemy possibility of invasion of the island, which is locally had a duty to provide for, while in Rome is still considered very doubtfully. He pointed to the two most likely landing areas in the western and south eastern cusp triangle Gela - Cape Passero - Catania. In the first case, according to Heckel, the British and Americans would have enjoyed the closeness of Tunisian airports, but subsequently encountered difficult terrain for advanced inward. It was therefore considered more likely an enemy amphibious landing in the Gela area -Cape Passero - Catania, which involved so a longer duration of navigation and therefore a lower chance of surprise, but he later enjoyed a hinterland longer suitable for penetration, he would have threatened directly to the Axis traffic in the Strait of Messina and would cut off the defense forces stationed in the western sector of the island.

After this lucid and accurate exposure, Col. Heckel proposed to employ in the sector Gela - Cape Passero - Catania, the Italian mobile troops "*keeping them as close as possible to the coast*" and

(48) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command, Gen. Guzzoni tele n. 14461/op of June 13, 1943 and folder 2221, attachment 171: tele. 14542 of 14 June 1943.

(49) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder, attachment 133: Minutes of the meeting with Col. Heckel, Chief of the G.S. of Col. Baade, June 9, 1943.

he announced that they would be located in the eastern sector, precisely in the Paternò and Caltagirone areas two of the three infantry regiments of the 15th Division "Sizilien", leaving in the west of the only the "Ens" regiment, but ready to move to where it was the greatest danger. A fourth German regiment was then formed in the Caltanissetta area with items posted at that time in various locations.

The first important proposal of Col. Faldella said that the use of the Italian mobile units near the southeastern cusp would have been possible only if given another division for the Army reserve. He recognized the validity of the proposal was instead on the location of the German "Sizilien" division with the "Fullriede" group behind Gela, the "Korner" group at Paternò, the "Ens" group in the western part of the island at Salemi and the new regimental formation "Neapel" at Caltanissetta. This deployment of German troops did not take into account of the forthcoming arrival in Sicily of the "H. Goering" armored division.

At that Col. Heckel also prospected a counterattack against the enemy eventually landed by divisions "Livorno" and "Napoli" on the way shortest and motorized German forces on the enemy's flank. In this proposal Faldella unspoken for now a precise answer, reserving the right to examine it and to submit it to Gen. Guzzoni returning from his tour of inspection. The Chief of the G.S. of the Armed Forces Sicily is said however ready to accept the request of Heckel to provide each German group a section of the motorized Carabinieri to prevent the German military of having to personally respect the delicate order no. 1, that is, *"to prevent at all costs that the population fleeing from the invaded coast on the inland roads."*

Connected to the latter problem was Col. Heckel's request regarding the movement of German troops across the island and especially the seventeen heavy "Tiger" tanks then in existence (of which eleven were in the east), which could only be transferred by railway. The Italian side asked about a detailed list of what was needed to transport and promised all possible help.

The exact arguments of Col. Heckel about the increased likelihood of an enemy landing in the southeastern cusp

Sicily were soon challenge by Gen. Rossi, commander of the XVI Army Corps allocated just to the east and Gen. Chirieleison, commander of the "Livorno" Division. They in fact during a meeting on June 13 with Col. Baade, which had organized the units of the "Sizilien", then entrusted to General Rodt, reputed that "*the enemy, having many means, could also attack the north western tip and other destinations*" ⁽⁵⁰⁾ from this the conclusion of Gen. Rossi that you were "*being instead in a position to cope with the enemies attempts which will make them*" suggestion in very general truth and that still denoted once the confusion of ideas, the overvaluation of the opponent's ability and ignorance about his strategic habits.

The same 13 June, the Command of F.F. AA. Sicily sent to the two dependent corps a memorandum on the defense of the island which, Faldella signature, dictated alleged amendments to Chapter III of the memorandum 5S of Roatta of 27 March ⁽⁵¹⁾. It is appropriate to report the text below.

"Attempted landing tending, beyond the occupation of the western tip of the island and the south oriented: or one or the other of them, the Agrigento area.

The *coastal defense forces* and various elements, reinforcing already available to them resist in place indefinitely.

The "*battle group*" of Raffadali -Aragona -Favara 177th Regiment. b) participate in analogy to what was said in the cases referred to in subparagraphs a) and b) of chapter I, according to the orders of Command XII Corps.

For eventualities c) of the same chapter I will this control with the Army Reserve. In the latter case should be maintained at all costs the possession of blocking bands positions identified from the heights of Cianciana - M. Giafaglione - plateau Racalmuto - M, Pisciacane.

- For the assistance of forces in coastal defense by lateral areas not used or "*mobile groups*" and "*tactical*" available nearby, are entitled to decide on the commander of the Corps".

We have said that the memorandum intended to dictate "alleged" changes in Chapter III of the previous memorandum 5S, because in reality it would repeat exactly the same words, as indeed was to detect unknown and then a sharp commentator

(50) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder, attachment 148: Minutes of the meeting of 13 June 1943,

(51) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder, attachment 166: dispatch n. 19245/Op Command FF.AA of Sicily on June 13, 1943 titled " Memorie sulla difesa della Sicilia."

of that memorandum, which he wrote in pencil in the margin: "*What changes? But if the attached sheet is the same as that of the memorandum 5S! What a mess!*"

Twenty-four hours later, on June 14, Gen. Cuzzoni sent to the G.S.R.E. and for information, to the Supreme Command and to the O.B.S. of Kesseiring of the new memorandum n. 14600 on the defensive situation of Sicily, in which it detailed pessimistic comments made known in Rome on 13 and 14 June with the same memorandum telegrams 14461 and 14542. Here are some of the arguments taken from the document question, which is still reproduced in its entirety as an appendix (Appendix n. 4) ⁽⁵²⁾.

The defensive situation, in terms of both the fixed structures that the availability of men and weapons, had not changed much from the one represented in March by Gen. Roatta, the coastal battalions, mostly made up of local senior military and who often never commanded, had to defend fronts at the sea from 10 to 45 km long, on average possessing an antitank cannon every eight kilometers. Mobile Defense was entrusted to the west to the XII Corps is composed of the infantry divisions "Assietta" and "Aosta", and to the east to the XVI Corps based solely on the "Napoli" Infantry Division. The latter was formed, like the "Aosta", almost exclusively by Sicilian soldiers, who were affected directly and deeply the moral distress of the population. The Army Command then available as reserves, the infantry division "Livorno" and the 15th *Panzergrénadier* Div. "Sizilien", whose extremely aggressive intentions, exposed by Col. Heckel, however, made their fears to Guzzoni even then a next divergence of operational views ⁽⁵³⁾.

The most urgent aid required in Rome concerned for the moment antitank artillery, vehicles, ships and boats, especially an strengthening of aviation and prompt transfer of the German "H. Goering" armored division onto the island and possibly of another Italian motorized division ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

(52) A.U.S.E., 1497 folder, annexed in 1049 and 2221 folder, attachment reminders 184 n. 14600 / op of 14 June 1943: "Situazione difensiva dell'Sicilia".

(53) E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, Rome 1956 op / cit. p. 85

(54) In regard to the latter request Guzzoni the Supreme Command announced to Superesercito on June 21 that Mussolini had arranged to send to Sicily the "M" division, the transfer of which would have to be made before the completion of the workforce and training. See A.U.S.E., 1497 folder, annexed in 1168: tele. 14186 by 21 June 1943 the Supreme Command. So, in the confirmed sending in Sicily both the "H. Goering" and the "M" Div. on June 29 the G.S.R.E., with sheet 19520, sent word to Gen. Guzzoni that by the time the dispatch of more troops was impossible and that then had to be used in the barrier bands parts of the mobile divisions already on the island. In the end, however, the "M" Div. was not sent to Sicily.

With Guzzoni acumen also emphasized in the memorandum in question than ever at that moment the military situation and that they were intimately related policy. In this regard could not be overlooked the depressing moral state of the population, the loss of "*pride and reactivity*" was attributed to insufficient food, with air strikes and unidentified, "*more remote causes*." For its part the clergy was held responsible for the food, instead of shaking, apathy and resignation of populations, merely exhort them to trust in God and thus working for their own interests "*and not to Italy and the defense of the island*".

From memorandum n. 14600 emerged so natural the bitter consideration that "*while other times everything he might have given a spiritual reaction against the enemy and a strong will to resist, now seems to achieve the opposite results. Depression increases and with it the feeling that yes runs rampant in any way as long as you finish*."

The Guzzoni reservations about the moral steadfastness had an immediate echo to Rome, so that the same argument was dedicated on the June 19 circular of the G.S.R.E, direct to all dependant Commands and also reproduced in the appendix (appendix n. 5)⁽⁵⁵⁾.

In this circular is recalled briefly the need to "*bite the bullet*", mindful of how they had been flipped in 1917-1918 the fate of a war which even then seemed compromised, as well as a human discipline and understanding, but inflexible in substance. To the proposal ended with the precise order of passing on weapons to all those who had shown indiscipline, weakness, defeatism or disorder before the enemy.

The guiding principles of the action of the subordinate units in Sicily were instead dictated by Gen. Guzzoni on June 20 with the circular 16/S.Op., Who briefly sanctioned the following⁽⁵⁶⁾.

- Addressing the opponent vigorously during his crisis,

(55) General Staff of Army, Circular 13 C.S.M. of 19 June 1943 on "moral steadfastness" in A.U.S.E., folder 1497.

(56) A.U.S.E., folder 2221, attachment 286: circular of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16/S. Op. Of June 20, 1943.

that occurs at the time of landing, and immediately after, *holding to the bitter end* the possession of the coast assigned to each, even in case of failure on the sides and isolation.

- Know how to operate independently in case of interruption of the connections.
- React immediately with counterattacks on the front of the sea and towards air drops.
- Avoid the division of units.
- Employ the Army reserves in a decidedly offensive tasks and maneuvering.

The trust that the above provisions would be energetic then applied effectively on the field should not be in any case excessive by General Guzzoni, if he deemed it the 27th of the month should send to the dependant commands the new Circular 18/S, which is also reproduced in the appendix (Appendix n. 6). With it the Command FF.AA of Sicily, taking a cue from the first reports of enemy source about the ease with which had been occupied the island of Pantelleria - an event that to be analyze later - warned not to have "blind faith" on the demeanor of our troops, but to take a watchful attitude, conscious and severe with the personnel available.

In the circumstance Gen. Guzzoni came even as facing possible that our fighter, especially Sicilian, could be overwhelmed by the "*desire to give up the fight or even to move in the enemy camp, with the hope of being able to more effectively protect their loved ones and their own interests.*" You can not say in short that the Commander in Chief of Sicily has made no secret of his concerns or that they were not objectively informed by a clear realism despite three days earlier, on June 24 Mussolini had uttered the famous "water's edge" speech, dictated by the most obtuse fanaticism⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Meanwhile Guzzoni beginning to receive from the dependent commands

(57) E. CANEVARI *La guerra italiana. Retroscena della disfatta*, vol. II, Rome, 1949, p. 781. Here are the most famous songs and cited such superficial speech: "It is necessary that as soon as the enemy will attempt to land is frozen on that line the sailors call the shore. ... If perchance does enter, we need the reserve forces -which we they are - break through on landed crushing them to the last man. So that one can say that they have occupied a corner of our country, but the occupied remaining forever in a horizontal position."

the first of a long series of complaints about shortages of resources of every kind, until a short time before unsuspected and unexpected atmosphere of rampant conformism, on the 19th and the same 27 June the XII and XVI Corps. into two lists were considering their deficiencies in the field of artillery, drawing attention to the lack of fuses, ammunition, tubes and get up to the telescope for some batteries, as well as the shortage of personnel and other equipment for almost all groups of the artillery⁽⁵⁸⁾. So always the 27th of the month, Guzzoni was forced to solicit in Rome sent the promised vehicles, pointing out that the percentage of his inefficient trucks was then 27% ⁽⁵⁹⁾.

On 1 July, the Information Office of the 6th Army, although still undecided whether it was Sicily or Sardinia would be the next enemy goal, he found that on the first island all the coasts could be the scene of a landing and then had to be vigilant everywhere. It came thus to provide even the use by the enemy of "*small squads of Italian renegades* ", as well as black soldiers, however, unable to withstand a prompt reaction of the defense. Also underestimated was the ability of US forces, without distinction of race, maneuvering at night to fight with bayonets, after choosing as a rebuttal to the recent US experience in the island of Attu in the Aleutian and instead ignoring what had happened just before at Guadalcanal⁽⁶⁰⁾.

Even in the days immediately preceding the invasion, namely on 5 and 6 July, General Guzzoni was forced to recall the need for greater discipline, a more effective organization of relief during the air raids, the strengthening of the defensive will and moral energies, that the detected and increased hoarding of civilian clothes by

(58) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder, attachments 361 and 372.

(59) A.U.S.E., 1499 folder, annexed in 1424: Telegram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 35511 of June 27, 1943.

(60) A.U.S.E., 2228 Folder: Information Bulletin no. 2 and 3 of the 6th Army in July 1, 1943. By that experience in the Aleutians is noted that the May 11, 1943.

The Task Force 51 of Adm. Rockwell began to land on Attu the American 7th Inf. Div., than with a too cautious tactic conduct took twenty days to get the upper hand on the 2,630 Japanese defenders and to complete the conquest of that island. See. A. Santoni: *Storia generale della guerra in Asia e nel Pacifico* 1937-1945, vol. II, Modena 1978, pp, 179-172

soldiers implied *a priori* very scarce.

The relationship between the Sicilian population and the military and local political authorities did not give rise to significant disagreements. Yet truly unsustainable were the privations that had to undergo the island's citizens, both for power shortage (in late May were missing 12,000 tons of flour compared to the ration quota) and because of the constant shelling. Faced with these existential difficulties the Sicilian countered an enviable sense of adaptation, supported by the hope that everything would end soon, and a general passive resistance to the increasingly discredited fascist regime. Example of this was the resounding failure of the planned formation of the "Centuries of Vespers volunteers," whose task should be to contribute to the armed defense of the island with guerrilla methods.

With the growing intake from information on enemy naval movements in those first days of July and then with increasing nervous tension, not lacking even false alarms. So in the night on 7 Supermarina he informed that a series of alleged fires at Marsala was to be deducted a local Anglo-American landing. Instead it was soon clarified by telephone from the Armed Forces Command Sicily that existed neither fires or enemy troops on the ground ⁽⁶¹⁾. On that same day, however, he was ordered by Rome day preparing the blocking of the ports of the western end of Sicily; which, however, did not appear achievable with the resources available. Thus on July 8 Guzzoni decided to arrange for merely using the wharfs of the port of Trapani and Marsala and inactivation and obstruction of the ports of Licata, Sciacca Porto Empedocle ⁽⁶²⁾.

At 19.30 on July 9 were reports of the approach of enemy convoys, the Command of the Armed Forces Sicily ordered the "*state of alarm*", then converted into "*state of emergency*" at 01:10 on July 10 when arrived the first reports of enemy paratroopers landings. Finally at 01:50 the same day Gen. Guzzoni ordered the blasting of interruptions arranged in Porto Empedocle and Licata ⁽⁶³⁾. On this occasion we remember that

(61) E. FALDELLA: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit .pag. 102.

(62) A.U.S.E., 2228 folder: "historical diary of the Military Command of the 6th Army," day July 8, 1943.

(63) A.U.S.E., 2124 / B folder, file 2124 / A: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943 '-.

"timely destruction of the ports of the islands" was in those same hours recommended personally by General Ambrosio to the three Chiefs of the Armed Forces G.S. with a dispatch posted at 01:30 hours on 10 July (64).

(64) A.U.S.E., folder 1501, Annex 469: tele. 14697/op of 10 July 1943 of the Supreme Command.

CHAPTER IV

OPPOSING FORCES**1. ITALIAN - GERMAN REPORTS AND GERMAN EXPANSION IN ITALY**

When with the fall of Tripoli and the loss of Libya the tide of war in the Mediterranean appeared to take on a decidedly negative trend the European Axis, multiplied by the German outbreaks of mistrust about the real Italian willingness to respect the alliance contracted. So February 13, 1943, during one of the usual naval conference of Hitler, Admiral Donitz, recent new commander of the *Kriegsmarine*, he came to complain to Hitler that British submarines were free to attack the Axis traffic even before the Italian ports.

In the subsequent meeting of 26 February Donitz then reported that he had tied talks with the Royal Navy for the requisitioning of many Italian private yachts to be used to traffic with Tunisia "*possibly under German command*". For the same purposes the *Seekriegsleitung* decided to set up in mid-February in the Mediterranean Naval Command of defense of traffic Adm. Ruge, who was to accompany the old German Navy Command in Italy governed by Adm. Weichold and then by Adm. Meendsen-Bohlken from March.

Then on March 8 it was the turn of Goering, commander of the *Luftwaffe*, to express in a visit to Rome numerous complaints about the performance of air and naval operations in the Mediterranean. Echoed on 15 and 16 March by Donitz is still in front of Mussolini is in a meeting with Adm. Riccardi, Chief of the Royal Navy G.S., in which Donitz got permission to aggregate to the Supermarina the new Command of Adm. Ruge but dependent from Berlin.

The existence of two German naval commands in Rome could not, however, but lead to overlapping responsibilities and conflicts of authority, so the 18 May, after the fall of Tunisia, the Office of Ruge absorbed that of Meendsen-Bohlken, less senior fellow, returned to Germany ⁽¹⁾.

However, it was even more so in the aerial sector that the Armed Forces of the Third Reich were engaged in support of the defense of the Mediterranean and Sicily in particular. From the second half of May 1943 in fact the aircraft of the 2nd *Luftflotte* were more busy than ever to counter the growing Allied air raids especially against the airfields, lines of communication and the Sicilian cities, as well as against the ferry service in the Straits of Messina.

The attacks of the Anglo-American bombers, especially the four-engined against the major urban centers, also aimed at the prostrating Italian morale and weaken, especially in Sicily, the strength purposes, although in some cases they got exactly the opposite effect to exasperate the resentment of the people against the allies. However, the air offensive brought about a real Italian-German aviation weakening and produced a significant slowdown in the flow of traffic to Sicily.

On the German side it was realized how important it was to face the offensive of the Allied four-engined, since the results against them might depend, militarily and politically, the development of subsequent events in Italy; but the problem was not a simple solution. It would be necessary for example that the insufficient number of fighter aircraft available to the intercepts were sent to fight maneuvered by a single command, the implementation of which was, however, until then increasingly frustrated by the jealousies and of force particulars the between the European Axis allies. This objective of of the rest continued to be unreachable for other technical reasons,

(1) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: "Historical Journal of Supreme Command, on 18 May 1943. At the date of the invasion of Sicily in Italy, the Kriegsmarine had a big thin vessels contingent framed in the so-called 7th Naval Security Division, composed in total of six corvettes, three destroyers, eleven sub-chasers, two mine-layers, seventy minesweepers and motor mine sweepers, twenty motor torpedo boats and four support vessels. There were also at that time in the Mediterranean seventeen Germanic U-boats.

such as the difference of language and, above all, the lack of radio equipment on the Italian aircraft, which made it impossible for the military maneuver of the whole squadron.

The result, unpleasant for the later Germanic behavioral consequences, was that the Germans came to undertake the most defensive aerial activity over Sicily, Sardinia and the south-central peninsula areas where the main flight units then were dispersed the 2nd *Luftflotte*. However it must be said in this regard that the German aircraft commitment in Italy, though tireless, Goering was not at all satisfied that, in the rough intent to solicit greater results, even for the transfer to threaten the Russian front as infantry troops, the precious fighter pilots. He also had to know that the pilots would be subject to a council of war when, after a fight, they could not prove any success, unless they were not themselves been killed or seriously injured.

Then when Goering was persuaded that the 2nd *Luftflotte*, due to an insane quantitative inferiority compared to Anglo-American aviation, was going through a very critical moment, he thought he could improve the situation by changing the direct commander. Therefore, on June 12, 1943 Marshal Kesselring, who held then double the Southern Front Command (OBS) and the 2nd *Luftflotte*, was removed from the command of this last Grand Aerial Unit, which passed under the orders of Gen. Wolfram von Richthofen, a cousin the famous "Red Baron" and former commander of the 8th *Fliegerkorps* during the Balkan campaign of 1941 and then the 4th *Luftflotte* in Russia ⁽²⁾.

Arriving in Italy, von Richthofen quickly realized that the situation in this area was very different from that presented to him in Berlin by Goering and Kesselring was right in many things. Therefore, in agreement with the O.B.S commander. He granted the personnel rest periods and 22 June agreed with Gen. Fougier, Chief of the Air Force G.S. the, transferring German-Italian bomber units from Sicily to the mainland.

(2) A. SANTONI -F. MATTESINI: La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945, Rome 1980, p. 390. Commander of the so-called "*Fliegerfuhrer Sizilien*" was Gen. Mahncke, who had under his command Colonel Pelz as commander of the bomber units.

Thus the Sicilian and Sardinian airports, heavily bombarded by the enemy, they continued to only host the fighter and assault units and to serve as a stopover for the actions of Axis bombers started from bases on the peninsula.

The main thrust of activities II *Fliegerkorps*, spearhead of the 2nd *Luftflotte*, with Tactical Command in Taormina, was directed at that time against the ports of North Africa, where the Allies were massing ships, troops and materials for a reputed imminent overseas leap in Rome and Berlin, but whose target was not identified in the two capitals of the Axis until July 6.

Because of the inferiority that the enemy German bombers were active almost exclusively at night, but in doing so their efforts were completely disproportionate to the limited success. In fact, between the night of May 14, the day after the fall of Tunisia, and that of 5 July, the bombers of the II *Fliegerkorps* executed twenty-four raids against the ports of North Africa French in enemy hand, using successively a total of 772 Ju. 88, losing a good 55. Conversely they caused only damage to port facilities, to the two British destroyers *Ilex* and *Petard* (respectively the night of 14 May at Bona and the night of June 17 at Bizerte) and sank at Oran on the night of May 19 American steamboat *Samuel Griffin*.

The same increasing German commitment to the defense of the Italian and especially Sicilian territory was also evident in the ground field, by a further two divisions offered by Hitler to Mussolini in mid-May, and that would lead to those in Italy numbering five⁽³⁾. The refusal of these two German divisions from the Supreme Command on May 12 was the focus of follow-up comments. Kesselring argued that doing so "*The Italians wanted to remain masters in their house*," I and the Führer was even more explicit, saying that with such behavior the Italian Supreme Command wanted to preserve "*free hand for the future*" and that there was therefore trust the will of the Italian military to continue the war to the end.

(3) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. cit., p. 30. The three German divisions already in Italy at that time they were the 90th and 15th meant for Sardinia and the "H. Goering" destined to Sicily.

The aforementioned conviction Hitler was even more reinforced by the pessimistic report that von Neurath made on May 20 on his visit to Sicily, from which they were drawn further elements to the detriment of the defensive determination of Gen. Roatta, then commander of the 6th Army on the island, and the local population ⁽⁴⁾. It was at the end of this interview on 20 May that Hitler asked Gen. Keitel to prepare a plan, then approved two days later by the name of ALARICO, to take over the control of northern Italy in case of an change of mind of the Mediterranean ally ⁽⁵⁾.

Shortly after, however, the changed perspective of a forthcoming invasion changed his opinion to Gen. Ambrosio, that in the three talks with Kesselring of the 1st, 11th and 12 June came to ask for the transfer to the peninsula of the two other divisions Germanic offered by Hitler and at first rejected ⁽⁶⁾.

Therefore the 3rd and 16th *Panzergranadier* Div. went down along the boot up to Rome and Salerno, what made possible the simultaneous transfer of the "*Hermann Goering*" to Sicily, whose I Armored Battalion began to pass the Strait of Messina on the 27 of the month, reaching the island its own recon Bn. already arrived for four days and the entire, "Sizilien" Division. The latter, formed by troops detained on the island when it became apparent loss of Tunisia, had been organized under the temporary command of Col. Baade and was then baptized in early June as the 15th *Panzergranadier* Div. ⁽⁷⁾

Not yet reassured about the Axis defenses ahead of an invasion, Gen. Ambrosio ended June 17 to ask also for a sixth and a seventh German division, which were the 26th and 29th *Panzergranadier* and arriving on the peninsula in early July ⁽⁸⁾.

Meanwhile on June 11, General Müller was appointed "Commander of the German Armed Forces in Sicily" with the following duties ⁽⁹⁾.

(4) The report of von Neurath to Hitler is also reproduced in W. CHURCHILL: *La seconda guerra mondiale*, op. cit. vol. IX, p. 42-43.

(5) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 50.

(6) *Ibid.* p. 74-75.

(7) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 30.

(8) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit. p. 75.

(9) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder, page no. Op. Pr. 230/43 of June 11, 1943, released by the Command of the 6th Army with circular 15035 / op of 24 June 1943.

- Territorial Powers on German troops in the island (housings, transport, connections, services, etc.), In compliance with the provisions of the German General link to the Italian 6th Army, of forthcoming appointment.

- Direction and responsibilities on fixed Germanic Commands (airports, connecting systems, deposits, etc.) And the non-divisional units,

- Procurement for the German troops and tasks of the Intendenza.

The same June, the day before losing command of the 2nd *Luftflotte*, Gen. Kesselring, who was still commander of O.B.S., Issued with sheet Op. Pr. 229/43 measures for the territorial defense of Sicily. According to them every run or airport would have to "*defend themselves to the last*" employed by "*commanders of combat zone*", vested with "full dictatorial powers," which would "solemnly swear" in turn to "resist until the extreme"⁽¹⁰⁾. They followed in the same circular various alarming hypothesis, divided into three degrees of danger, and the procedures for protection of principals, Airports and installations. In particular, it prescribed the establishment of places for "porcupine" barriers at a distance from the real objectives and the use for "*local mobile shock reserves*" and "*mobile alarm units*." Finally, he recommended a "continuing close cooperation with the assistance to local Italian Commands, "*but it added that it was also necessary*" to keep in mind the possibility that troops and Italian troops being employed elsewhere and that, therefore, all the defenders of the posts remained entrusted only to German troops."

The said order of Kesselring was then allowed the addition of the Commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily Gen. Guzzoni, including some details like the oath for the expected "combat zone commanders" whose names had to be disclosed before June 16, as well as connection systems for these territorial defense centers.

However the most important decision of that period was the appointment of General Senger und Etterlin to the German liaison officer at the 6th Army, designated on June 22 by

(10) A.U.S.E., 2221 folder, attachment 360: page no. Op. Pr. 229/43 of 11 June 1943, released by the Command of the 6th Army circular 15577 / op of 27 June 1943.

Hitler⁽¹¹⁾. The tasks assigned to such a high official were specified by the O.B.S. the 25th of the month in the Annex to 2893/43 and a summary sheet were as follows ⁽¹²⁾.

Elaboration and transmission of orders to all German troops in Sicily and say the right to express to the Commander of the Italian 6th Army -by which he was directly depended - his operational opinions, without, however, be able to force their suggestions.

-protection of the needs of the German units on the island, according to the O.B.S instructions.

-command from a territorial point of view of all German forces in Sicily, whatever their confirmed tactical dependence on Italian military authorities.

This appointment did not escape the British, who through the ULTRA decryption knew on June 27 that "General von Senger und Etterlin had been an officer appointed German liaison with the Italian 6th Army, as well as territorial commander of German forces in Sicily, having already commanded in February the 17th Armored Division" ⁽¹³⁾.

Once arrived in Sicily Gen. Senger und Etterlin he participated June 26 in an important meeting with Guzzoni, Faldella, Kesselring, Muller and Rodt, who was appointed commander on the 6th of the month of the 15th Division "Sizilien" ⁽¹⁴⁾.

According to the minutes of the meeting of June 26, we have reproduced in the Appendix (Appendix no. 7), the following topics were touched ⁽¹⁵⁾.

1) Formal confirmation by Kesselring that the top command in Sicily was up to General Guzzoni, leaving Senger und Etterlin the opportunity to make suggestions on the German side ⁽¹⁶⁾.

(11) F.M. SENGER und ETIERLIN: *Combattere senza paura e senza speranza*, Milano 1968, p. 207.

(12) A.U.S. E., Folder 1500, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command, Annex 17: Folder 2893/43 of the O.B.S. on June 25 1943

(13) PRO background defe 3, 573. Reports folder based on intelligence from German Army and Air Force traffic, 16th September 1942 - 15th May 1945, dispatches of HUT 3 Bletchley Park- document CX / MSS / C 142, forwarded to 08:52 hours of June 28, 1943

(14) F. KUROWSKI: *Das Tor zur Festung Europa*, Neckargemund 1966, pp. 22:26.

(15) A.U.S.E., 22211 folder attachment 336: Minutes of the meeting of 26 June 1943.

(16) Yet on July 10 S. M. of R. Army had to remind the O.B.S, with sheet n. 2893; Seq., That the operational orders to the German units in Sicily would always be reached "through the Italian Corp commanders, or division and not by the German liaison officer."

2) Proposal of Kesselring to advance the defensive line of Sicily at least the edge of the mountainous area, so as to bring too many "*so far forward as to soon counterattack the enemy when he set foot on dry land*". This also because experience had shown to the Germans what was difficult and expensive to move troops inside towards the coast in strong contrast enemy aircraft. It was also to be avoided, according to Kesselring, a movement within too heavy tanks "Tiger", who needed rail transport for distances of 50-100 kilometers⁽¹⁷⁾.

3) Conviction of Gen. Guzzoni the need to maintain a large mobile reserve in the island, because of the extreme uncertainty about areas of possible enemy landing.

About the burning issue concerning the location of the two German divisions then available for Sicily, reference should be made not only the examinee minutes of the meeting, but also to the first part of the "Report of the Commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943."⁽¹⁸⁾ According to it we know that the intention of Kesselring was. allocate the onrushing "H. Goering", very strong in tanks, but weak in infantry (only two battalions), to the south east of the island along with a regiment of the 15th Div. "Sizilien" and move the rest of it in the Division to the west.

General Guzzoni instead wanted to bring together the command of the German 15th Division with his 104th *Panzergranadiere* Regiment of Lt. Col. Ens in the region to the east of Piazza Armerina and allocate the 115th "Korner" Regiment respectively and the 129th "Fullriede" Regiment to the plain of Catania and south of Caltagirone. In this way the entire "Sicily" Div. would have been geared toward both the plain of Catania and towards Gela, with possibility to move the bulk of his forces towards one or the other possible line of the enemy invasion. With regard to the "H. Goering" division the intention of Guzzoni was to deploy a third of his forces to the west, in place of removed "Ens" group, and two-thirds in Caltanissetta-S. Cataldo area as Army reserves, to take advantage of its extreme mobility⁽¹⁹⁾.

(17) Even Rommel confirmed in his memoirs the opportunity of a possible deployment behind the coasts, to prevent easy "expansion of the enemy bridgehead". See E. ROMMEL: *Guerra senza odio*, Milano 1952, p. 404.

(18) A.U.S.E. folder 2124/B, file 2124/A.

(19) F. KLITROWSKI: *Dai Tor zur Festung Europa*, op. cit. pp. 36-38.

At the base of the differing views on the location of the two German mobile divisions it was also different belief on the enemy's attack arising, according Kesselring was more likely in the west, while for Guzzoni was to be expected more correctly in the east or south east of the island.

After the meeting of 26 June he came to a compromise that took into account in most of the German wishes, especially since Guzzoni became convinced of the weakness of the "H. Goering" in infantry troops. The following provisions were then given (See map n. 5 and sketch n. 1 in the appendix).

-The transfer of the "H. Goering" from the receiving area Leonfone-Adrano towards the Caltagirone area, where it would pass under the command of the XVI Corps, already comprising the Italian "Napoli" Div. (between Vizzini and Palazzolo Acreide) and "Livorno" (along the valley of del Salsa), the latter, however, withdrawn shortly after the Army Corps and included as Army reserve ⁽²⁰⁾.

- Movement of the Command of the 15th Div. "Sicily" and his "Fullriede" group (129th Regt., of three battalions) from S. Cataldo - Caltanissetta westward between Salemi and S. Ninfa. Here they would have reached the "Ens" group (104th Regiment with two battalions) and it would be in the employ of the XII Corps already composed by Italian divisions "Aosta" and "Assietta" - respectively located between Alcamo and Salemi and Belice valley. It was however agreed that the transfer of the "Sizilien" div. command and the group of Lt. Col. Fullriede would be implemented only after the completion of the deployment of the "H. Goering" to Caltagirone. Since then this last condition occurred just on 9 July, eve of the invasion, the movement of the "Sizilien" div command. and the "Fullriede" group to S. Cataldo was never implemented ⁽²¹⁾.

(20) The "H. Goering" armored division Gen. Conrath passed actually employed by the XVI Corps. July 9th. It should have been later reinforced by two more infantry battalions and owned as of June 30, 1943 8,739 men and 82 tanks, in addition to the 17 heavy "Tiger" tanks, that were provided by the "Sizilien" Div. See. A.U.S.E., 2221 folder, attachment 395: memo of Lt. Col. Poli, countersigned by Col. Faldella of June 30, 1943 and 2228 folder: message of Gen. Senger und Etterlin n. Z.O. of 2 July 1943.

(21) The rapid deployment to Sicily of the "H. Goering", which ended on July 9, was a source of admiration from the Supreme Command, which already from the 8th with dispatch 01500/UT/OP hoped to Superesercito and Supermarina that speed was taken as an example by our transport organization. See. A.U.S.E., folder 1501, attachment 359.

- Location of the "Korner" Group (115th Regiment of the "Sizilien" with two battalions) at Paterno, behind Catania. This German group then merged with tank Battalion, a recon company and an artillery group of the "*H. Goering*" giving life to the group of Col. Schmalz.

-Constitution Southwest of Enna of the "Neapel" group of Col. Geisler, formed by 215th tank company with 15 tanks, arriving from the continent and a battalion mortars and weapons of accompanying taken from the "Fullriede" Regt.

-To the rear, the division "Livorno" in the area south east of Caltanissetta and, as mentioned, its absorption into the Army reserve.

With the execution of these directives, the Italian- German mobile forces took on that same location present at the time of the Allied landings (See. map n. 5).

Finally we summarize the articulation of German combat units on the island, which can also be found in the appendix (appendix n. 8). The "Sizilien" division of Gen. -Radt included 16,047 men and was formed by an recon company, three Inf. Regt., by a Art. Regt., by a A/T Bn., by two mortars Bn., by a pioneers Bn. and 67 tanks including the 17 "Tiger" provided to the "*H. Goering*" Div. The latter armored division of only 8,739 men was in command of Gen. Conrath and included an Armored Regt., a recon company, two motorized Inf. Battalion. (total 82 tanks in addition to the 17 "Tiger" borrowed from "Sizilien"), an anti-aircraft *Flak* unit, an Art Regt., a mortar Battalion, and a pioneers Battalion. From "Sizilien" and from "H. Goering" had been extracted already examined the tactical group of Col. Schmalz.

On July 12, as we shall see later, they arrived in Sicily in two regiments of German paratroopers (3rd of Col. Heilmann and 4th of Lt. Col. Walther) and the 15th began the movements for the transfer to the island of the 29th *Panzer Grenadier* Div. of Gen. Fries, consisting of two mechanized regiments (the 15th and the 71st) each with three battalions, of the 29th Art. Regiment with three Bn., the 129th Armored Recon Bn., a pioneers Bn. and a Flak group.

In conclusion it was calculated that in the first few days

(22) F. KUROWSKI: *Das Tor zur Festung Europa*, op. Cit, pp. 24, 27-28 and 163-164.

the invasion of German troops into Sicily would amount to 30,000 men, of which 28,000 fighters, while during the whole campaign were used by the Germans 67,500 men, of which 62,500 fighters. Of them, as we will detail in the end, 13,500 wounded or sick were evacuated as of July 15, 39,569 were able to ferry to Calabria during the operation of LEHRGANG eviction, 4,325 were confirmed dead and 10,106 prisoners and missing people, including an unknown number the dead buried in mass graves.

2. THE ITALIAN LAND DEFENSE IN SICILY (see. map # 5)

Combat troops for the defense of Sicily at the began operation HUSKY 'formed a numerical set of 175,000 Italians and 28,000 Germans with 498 pieces of field artillery, in addition to those at fixed locations, 100 Italian tanks and 149 German plus another 15 incoming. Then it was necessary to add a number of about 57,000 between Italian and German professionals Services, so the grand total was up to 2,604,000 men.

These troops were divided into two Corps Commands of XII and XVI Army Corps and Army contingent, according to the order of the battle in the appendix (appendix n. 8).

The headquarters of the Command of Armed Forces Sicily was at Enna, while the XII and XVI Corps had their commands, respectively in Corleone and Piazza Armerina.

The defensive line close to the beaches was entrusted to five divisions, two brigades and defined independent regiments. "Coastal", devoid of mobility, for a total of 63 battalions (see. map n. 5). A sixth coastal division, the 230th, was inserted just the day of the invasion in the area of Marsala and Mazara del Vallo, between the Naval base of Trapani and the 202nd coastal Div. To be exact, with dispatch n. 1/9604/op of 10 July 1943 of Command. XII Corps, was assigned to the sixth division to the coastal area between Torre S. Teodoro and the Arena river, formerly attributed partly to the 202nd Coastal Division and the 208th Coastal Div. Which he therefore has the responsible for the only the Gulf of Castellammare on the northern coast of Sicily ⁽²³⁾.

(23) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps" Annex 11 dispatch 1/9604 / op of 10 July 1943.

The available four divisions of the Italian line and the two German were instead allocated more inside, according to the agreements already tested, ready to rush to the recognized enemy landing zones.

There were also two "Defense of Port" entrusted to the Army: those of Palermo (Port "N") and of Catania (Port "E"), while safeguarding the twelve airports special fixed quota had been allocated supported by eight "mobile groups". Finally percent anti-paratrooper nuclei (N.A.P.), each consisting of a platoon of mostly older conscripts, had the task of locating, use and neutralize the possible infiltration of air-landing troops by the Anglo-Americans. Another 45 N.A.P. made up of the Fascist Militia soldiers were dissolved for limited reliance in June.

Employed by Supermarina, through the Autonomous Naval Command of Sicily of Adm. Barone, were instead the three Naval Bases of Messina - Reggio Calabria (Adm. Barone), Augusta - Syracuse (Adm. Leonardi) and Trapani (Adm. Manfredi), the latter became "Defense of the Port" from 15 July, as well as eight armored trains⁽²⁴⁾.

The low efficiency of the troops responsible to fixed coastal defenses clear from a study of Gen. Attilio Quercia, former Chief of the XII Corps G.S. in Sicily. We therefore useful to reproduce below some excerpts from that judgments published in a essay on behalf of the Centro Alti Studi Militari⁽²⁵⁾.

"The commanders were, in principle, Brigadier General who had reached such a level in the reserve. Almost everyone kept unchanged the fine qualities of old soldiers, but lacked updated professional preparation.

The Chiefs were officers with the title S. G., but they were not

(24) From 15709/op sheet of the Supreme Command dated 30 June 1943 it shows that the armored trains of the Royal Navy in Sicily were the following eight: 120-IV-S in Catania. 102-I-T at Targia (Syracuse), 76-II-T in Licata. 76-I-T in Porto Empedocle, 120-III-S in Porto Empedocle, 76-III-T in Mazzara del Vallo, 152-II-T in Carini, 152-I.T in Termini Imerese. See A.U.S.E., 2221 folder, attachment 397 and G, FIORAVANZO: *I treni armati della Marina*, in «Rivista Marittima»- October 1966, p. 22. The Faldella instead wrongly claims that armed trains of the Royal Navy in Sicily were then only four. See E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit . p, 54. Note that even Pantelleria and the Pelagie islands depended on the G.S. of the Royal Navy.

(25) A. QUERCIA: *Situazione difensiva della Sicilia alla vigilia dello sbarco anglo-americano* Centro Alti Studi Militari. Roma 1951/52.

Map 5



s.S.M. - they had all the responsibilities of colleagues in other major units and they were worse off due to lack of employees with the same title.

The ordering in almost all came from the reserve or the reserve officers. Many of them were loaded with, years, with, family concerns and without updated professional preparation, or inexperienced and without teachers.

The troop was made up large part by older classes, while many young people were exempted, and 70% came from the regional recruitment ⁽²⁶⁾.

They had no means of transportation except for a number of bicycles and in many cases the supply of food and water was done on a human shoulder.

The location was in inhospitable areas, often malaria, or in towns, in direct contact with the civilian population.

The tours of duty were very heavy for the constant reduction in strength due to malaria, *so not all the works were overseen*. There was no possibility of granting very restorative rest, nor to carry out fruitful training.

It escaped no one the disproportion between the tasks and the means (on average the grid density was a machine-gun team every kilometer, a gun with the anti-tank task every three kilometers, a battery every eight kilometers) ⁽²⁷⁾.

All went on to face for signs of nerve-wracking waiting that lasted for years. Admiral Frank Thiess in his book. "Tsushima" wrote: *"Whatever is pending inactive rust on the soldiers' weapons. It corrodes not only steel but also the spirit of the men leading discourages in some despair in others."*

The divisions were distinct with numbers, no traditions. In summary, the troops in question had little combative capacity and little Grand Unit cohesion".

In better condition were the troops of the so-called movable defense, consisting of the four divisions of Italian infantry "Aosta" "Assietta", "Napoli" and "Livorno", of which only the latter is truck portable and other vehicles equipped for one battalion,

(26) That Sicily was defended by Sicilians seemed at first to find a great system, destined to be bitterly disappointed by the fact predictable that local soldiers have always and everywhere more reasons to desert and more likely to be hosted and aided by the population than to troops recruited in other regions.

(27) For example, the 206th coastal Div., who soon would have to bear the entire landing in the British sector, provided on its front of 132 km with eight battalions, totaling 36 men per km, 215 heavy machine guns, amounting to 1.6 per kilometer, 474 machine guns, equivalent to one every 278 meters, 54 mortars, 81 mm. equal to one every 4 kilometers, and 56 pieces of artillery batteries in fourteen equal to one piece every 2.4 km.

in the two German divisions "Sizilien" and "Goering" (incomplete) and two regiments of Bersaglieri.

The four Italian line divisions were each divided into two regiments of infantry, a Blackshirts Legion (excluding the "Livorno"), a 81 mm mortars battalion, an artillery regiment of four groups and two 20 mm anti-aircraft batteries, a engineers battalion and a unit of the Services. With quotas taken from the infantry divisions and with the Army Corps reinforcement eight "battle group" units were finally made, half of which truck-destined to contribute to coastal defense and placed at the disposal of the Army Command.

Also in the above line of Italian divisions large part of the troops had local recruitment and the lower cadres came mostly from the supplement, but the commanders and the chiefs of G.S. They were almost all in permanent service and training was undoubtedly higher.

The German divisions were well armed and trained, and possessed a high sense of duty and excellent professional qualities. Worrying was instead the involution of relations between Germans and Italians both military and civilian.

The twelve airports of the island were manned, as we mentioned, from fixed units and eight "mobile groups", which are also available to the Command of the 6th Army. Each fixed unit was formed by two companies of infantry, by two batteries of 149/13 and by anti-aircraft weapons and depended for use by airport Command. Each mobile group consisted of troops of the Army Corps, ie generally by a company of motorized infantry, by a light tank company, a motorized machine gun company, a self-propelled antitank company to 47/32, by a motorized battery and a section anti-aircraft 20 mm.

On this last point it should be stressed that, apart from the German *Flak*, the defense entrusted to Italian anti-aircraft weapons (DICAT) that Italian anti-aircraft defense of the territory) could be defined qualitatively inadequate to the enhanced penetration of allied aviation, despite Sicily having total of 289 batteries, divided into 49 Army, 57 Navy, 109 of Milmar and 74 within the naval bases ⁽²⁸⁾.

(28) M. PUDDU: *Guerra in Italia 1943-1945*, Rome 1965, p. 53 note. German Flak available in Sicily of 33 batteries from 88 mm. and numerous 20 mm. machine guns

The Italian field artillery, excluding therefore the stationary coastal batteries, instead added up to 368 pieces, which were side by side at the beginning of HUSKY another 130 German field pieces.

There finally reserve units of the Army and the Army Corps. The Army units included a field battery, two anti-aircraft batteries, the II/10th Assault, the XI sappers Battalion "Livorno" and 10th Self Propelled grouping with 24 semoventi of the excellent 90/53. The two Army Corps instead each had reserve as a regimental group of field artillery with five groups with mechanical towing, a machine gunners battalion, a group of 75-CK-aircraft artillery, an engineering battalion, an armored battalion of the 131st Tank Regiment, however, consists of the modest Light Tanks and French Renault R/35 war booty, and two tank companies decrepit Fiat 3000. Most of the mobile units of the Corps was still merged to form the mentioned eight "battle groups" and the eight "mobile groups", to defend the coast and airport respectively.

The low number of fixed concrete defenses, due to the already mentioned shortage of raw materials and labor, as well as the inadequacy of means of transport both maritime and land greatly accounted entire defensive organization. Because of Allied air supremacy is a sharp contraction occurred already reduced traffic and the sea in practice only the sailing ships could not hope to attract the attention of the Anglo-American aircraft. The same port of Messina, the main port, was littered with sunken hulls and ground facilities were seriously damaged by the raids, while three of the five original ferry ships were sunk and two seriously damaged ⁽²⁹⁾. In this situation only the Germans, with their own landing craft service powerfully protected by anti-aircraft artillery, managed to maintain a sufficient connection between Sicily and the mainland.

The consequence of this fundamental logistics weakness was that in the month of June 1943 arrived by sea in the island 54,000 tons of supplies on the total of 210,000 tons considered statistically necessary for the needs of the Armed Forces and of the population ⁽³⁰⁾.

(29) The ferry *Cariddi* was hit and damaged by planes on June 7.

(30) E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 40.

The land transport suffered from the destruction of railway equipment and for damage to the stations, workshops and ports, as well as to the shortage of coal and diesel fuel, the lack of spare parts and tires. Regarding in particular the trucking industry, it is estimated that a quarter of the approximately 3,000 vehicles assigned to the Command of the Armed Forces Sicily was unusable. In June also the military authorities were forced to divert from departmental tasks a thousand trucks, and earmarked to increase the rate of 800 vehicles already used for supplies to the population, in view of the increased demand for the transport of the new wheat harvest.

The allied bombings not then lacked even affect the morale of the men of fleets, under continuous air pressure. It provides a test of the old diary XII automotive park of Sicily, where it noted that the raids on 7 and 8 July engendered "*a real panic in the employee ranks*" and that from that moment began "*the confusion of the soldiers, making extremely difficult and precarious the work of the officers, whom felt he could no longer hold on to their employees as before.*" Under the date of July 10 then the same journal adds:

"On the first pass of enemy military aircraft, unfortunately, followed by a little firm behavior of some officers abandoned the camp and took refuge in a railway tunnel located nearby (Colle del Redenrore)" ⁽³¹⁾.

Among the amenities were significant shortcomings that antitank weapons and mines. The minefields were therefore necessarily of modest extension and, given the need to protect the civilian population from unfortunate accidents, they were clearly delimited and a range of signposts. The trouble was that many of these signs were still in place at the time of the enemy landing "*because due to frequent alarms would have had to remove and replace frequently and these works do not belong in the Italian nature*" ⁽³²⁾.

(31) All in A.U.S.E., 1174 folder: "Historical Journal of the Directorate of Military XII of Sicily car pool, from July to August 1943".

(32) A. OAK: *Situazione difensiva della Sicilia alla vigilia dello sbarco anglo-americano*, C.A.S.M., Rome, 1951-52 cit.

The anti-tank ditches made before the invasion were few and, lacking proper excavating machines, were the result of a laborious work of arms by the same troops, who saw such increased their discomfort with a further decline of their fighting ability.

These deficiencies listed rendered unworkable the so-called "bands of the barriers" with the task of holding the adversary at appropriate rearward resistance positions and refuse to proceed inward for the time needed to counter-maneuver the reserves ⁽³³⁾.

In light of the above it is therefore justified the following opinion expressed by General Montgomery in his diary ⁽³⁴⁾:

"The defense of the beach, although they were continuous, did not appear robust. There were short strips of barbed wire, with machine gun and a few bunkers, while the artillery forces on the coast were negligible."

3. ORGANIZATION OF SERVICES

More difficult to document the situation of logistic services of the 6th Army.

The currently existing documentation shows that the logistical organization of Sicily was headed, in 1943, by the Intendenza of the Army deployed at Enna and having various direction branches in Caltanissetta.

For their operation the Health Services, the Commissioner, and the Horse Artillery-Vet were supported to the territorial bodies (directorates and regional offices of Palermo and Messina). They were also constituted "logistical bases," as in Roccapalumba, Lentini and Vizzini and were organized Army magazines, depots, sectoral and special magazines.

The bodies of the various services were accumulating in correspondence with the surrounding areas of the headquarters of the Commander of the 6th Army and two corps deployed in Sicily and is aimed at ensuring that in all the territory the military self-sufficiency for two months, appropriately setting aside allocations necessary.

In particular:

(33) *Ibid.*

(34) B.L. MONTGOMERY: *Da El Alamein al fiume Sangro*, Milano 1950, p. 120

1) For the Health Service was dealing with the hospital organization making use of the island:

- Of beds available and being prepared;
- The use of school premises and colleges;
- The existing beds in the field hospitals of the Great Unity;
- specifically built Shacks.

The warehouse of the Army Health was based in Caltanissetta.

2) For the Commissariat Service they were formed:

- food and oat magazines of the Army, with offices at Leccara Friddi, Salemi, Militello and S. Cataldo;
 - magazines hay, straw and firewood of the Army, with offices in Caltanissetta, Salemi, Scordia and Roccapalumba;
 - magazines of apparel and Army equipment, with offices in Palermo and San Cataldo (footwear. were always insufficient and mediocre was the conditions of equipment);
- sectoral - magazines:

a) in the territory of the XII Corps: stock food and fodder in Alcamo, Trapani, Casa Bambina, Castelvetro, Menfi, Aragon and Campobello di Licata;

b) in the territory of the XVI Corps of the Army: stock food and fodder in Messina, Victoria, Modica, Rosolini, Floridia, Catania and Patti;

Special interior - magazines, of food and fodder, in Corleone, Canicattì, Caltanissetta, Enna, Dittaino, Piazza Armerina, Caltagirone, Vizzini, Ragusa and Paterno;

-Deposits frozen meat in Palermo, Messina, Catania and Paterno.

3) For the Artillery Service they were organized:

- artillery magazine, with offices in Palermo, Messina, Victoria, Enna, Costa Raja, Scalilli, Camporeale, Leccara Friddi, Piano S. Nicola, Sommatino, Bellia, Francavilla di Sicilia, Campo Italia and Grammichele;

sectoral - depots:

a) in the territory of the XII Corps in Favara, Agrigento, Castelvetro, Marsala, Trapani, Valguarnera Cerda, Sciacca, Villagrazia, Mazzara del Vallo and Alton;

b) in the territory of the XVI Corps in Milazzo, Misterbianco, Carlentini, Floridia, Modica, Vittoria, Noto and Messina.

Despite all these arrangements, the supply of

weapons and ammunition appeared difficult because of the deficiencies in terms of firearms and cannon ammunition, especially relating to medium-caliber artillery and coastal.

4) For the Engineer Services and transmission systems were set up, in addition to a direction of the Army warehouse with a with offices at Roccapalumba and Dittaino:

sectoral - magazine in Salemi, Aragon, Ragusa, Ferla and Randazzo.

Strong deficiencies existed for connecting materials.

5) For the Chemical Service it was organized a chemical magazine of the Army in Caltanissetta.

6) For the Equestrian Veterinary Service and there was an Army warehouse in Lercara Friddi, with a office in Mineo.

7) For the Automotive Service they were established:

- reserve vehicles magazine in Palermo;

- spare parts and tires magazine in Palermo, with offices at Paterno and Caltanissetta;

- consumables depots, fuels and lubricants in S. Ninfa, Alcamo, Partinico,

Roccapalumba, Serradifalco, Leonforte, Piazza Armerina and Misterbianco;

- depots of fuel and lubricants distribution in Marsala, Trapani, Salemi, Castelvetro, Alcamo, Gibellina, S. Margherita Belice, Partinico, Sciacca, Bisacquino, Corleone, Palermo, Marineo, Bivona, Lercara Friddi, Termini Imerese, Casteltermini, Agrigento, Vallerlunga , Canicattí, Collesano, Petralia, Caltanissetta, S. Stefano di Camastra, Enna, Gela, Leonforte, Piazza Armerina, Caltagirone, Victoria, Palagonia, Modica, Patti, Randazzo, Paterno, Palazzolo Acreide, Catania, Noto, Syracuse and Messina.

Grave remained the situation of transport, because of the lack, to the need of, approximately 2,000 vehicles. This also negatively influenced on the water supply, which also was affected by the shortage of equipment and suitable materials.

The organization of services in Sicily would eventually have use of the existing infrastructure on the island since before the war. However in the course of military operations was reported that the trust placed in what had been excessive and that it would be more appropriate to rely more, not easy optimism, organization of war, giving it a higher elasticity and mobility. In fact, with the gradually gradual loss of territory they remained in the hands of the enemy facilities and

plants that had not been possible to transfer and became irreplaceable.

4. THE AERIAL - NAVAL PROBLEM

The Italo-German military officials, in the event of enemy invasion of the islands or the Italian peninsula, more concrete made from the occupation of Pantelleria in the first half. June 1943, turned a great attention to the air problem. Just to that argument, however, it extended to the entire Mediterranean basin, was then dedicated a memorandum of Gen. Ambrosio of June 17, 1943 ⁽³⁵⁾.

On that occasion the Chief of the G.S. General, after emphasizing the now obvious and disastrous Allied air superiority in the Mediterranean, he pointed out that the Italian-German aircraft actually available at that time were about 1,320 to 2,390 available to the units, divided into 568 bombers, torpedo bombers and attackers and 752 fighters. Conversely it was assessed an enemy air force of 2,050 bombers and 2,200 fighter deployed in only central-western Mediterranean from Algeria to Libya, ie excluding the Anglo-American aircraft is located at the west end (Morocco and Gibraltar) that is in the basin Eastern ⁽³⁶⁾.

(35) A.U.S.E. folder 1500, Memorandum for the Supreme Command of 17 June 1943:

Aircraft problem of the Mediterranean ", transmitted to the Germanic O.K.W. by Gen. Marras with tele. 51216/op of 20 June 1943.

(36) The Italian Air Force history of Gen. Gen. Santoro does not agree with these official data and stipulates that on July 9, 1943 - were "available," 620 national and 780 German aircraft. See. G. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale.*, vol. II cit., P. 533-534. It should be noted, however, that in another of his works Gen. Santoro has indicated in the total of 862 Italian aircraft available in central Italy, in Apulia to Sardinia and Sicily on the invasion date. See G. SANTORO: *Situazione e impiego delle forze aeree italo-tedesche nel periodo compreso tra lo sbarco anglo-americano nel Nord Africa e lo sbarco in Sicilia*, Centro Studi Militari, Roma 1951/52. On the basis of the most recent data and you can point out that the R, Air Force had in Italy. July 9, 1943, a total of 930 combat aircraft, of which 449 efficient, while the German 2nd *Luftflotte* possessed 932 combat aircraft, of which 563 effective. For their part, the Allied fighter planes, thus excluding transportation; actually operating for HUSKY were actually 2,510. See. A. Santoni -F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, op cit., Pp. 382-383 and p. 413. For Allied details see. HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V p / 46.

The obvious disproportion of forces was aggravated by the axis of the number of targets to defend, as opposed to the opposing possibility of offensive concentrations against the designated target. However, it should also be repeated that the Italian-German inferiority was accentuated by the use of system of employing shares of aircraft, often sent against the enemy in an uncoordinated and fragmented manner, mainly due to the already underlined the lack of a unified command and of sufficient cooperation between the R. Air Force and the *Luftwaffe*.

The above not to mention certain disadvantages examined by the confusion of ideas and the overlapping of contrasting views within the Italian Supreme Command and the German commands about possible future enemy moves.

The criteria for action prepared by the Royal Air Force and by the German O.B.S. comprised the following three operational stages:

- a) incessant reconnaissance on enemy naval bases simultaneously to disruptive actions on the most profitable targets:
- b) violent raids in mass and long range against the first echelon of enemy amphibious ships once localized and contemporary escorts for Italian naval forces eventually exits into the sea to do battle;
- c) more decisive action behind the coasts against all enemies vessels during landing and contemporary bombing began on oncoming amphibians echelons belonging to successive waves.

Under the effects of the Anglo-American air pressure, June 22, 1943, as we have said, it was agreed by Gen. von Richthofen, the new commander of the 2nd *Luftflotte*, and Gen. Fougier, Chief of Staff of the Royal Air Force, the transfer of units from the Italian-German bombardment from Sicily and Sardinia to bases on the peninsula. Thereby airports of the two main islands continued to host the fighter and assault units and to serve as a stopover for the bombers.

* * *

Direct naval defense of Sicily was entrusted only to Italian-German light ships, including sixteen of Italian motor torpedo boats of Capt. Mimbelli and twenty German torpedo boats of the 3rd and 7th flotillas belonging to the aforementioned Naval German 7th security division. The latter then added six corvettes, three torpedo boats,

eleven sub-chasers, two mine-layers, seventy minesweepers and motor minesweepers, twenty motor torpedo boats and four support vessels ⁽³⁷⁾.

The Italian battle fleet was instead was set back from the February 1943 to La Spezia, with some cruisers in La Maddalena, to avoid being eliminated in the most exposed ports to Allied bombers. Such caution did not prevent air strikes on them at La Spezia and the three most modern Italian battleships *Littorio* and precisely three times on 14 and 19 April and 5 June, twice the *Vittorio Veneto* June 5 and twice the new *Roma* on 5 and 23 June 1943 ⁽³⁸⁾. Also on April 10 the heavy cruisers was *Trieste* sunk and *Gorizia* badly damaged by US aircraft while anchored at La Maddalena ⁽³⁹⁾. Ironically two other Italian battleships left in the nearest Taranto, that is the *Andrea Doria* and *Gaio Duilio*, were not disturbed by Allied bombers.

The decision of the Royal Navy to keep away from the dangerous waters of the battle fleet, also motivated by recognized technological inferiority, did ignite a fiery debate, centered not only on grounds of military opportunities, but also on so-called "moral duties" with a succession of accusations and justifications that is not the case to report here ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

In terms of history it seems that in any case such ignorant polemics that in July 1943 that were already in an advanced stage contacts and more or less recent negotiations for an exit of Italy from the conflict and that the Italian fleet, according to an emerging

(37) The names and distinguishing names of these many fine German ships in Italy may be found in A. A. SANTONI -F. MATTESINI: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, op. cit., p. 409-410. The Germans had also at that time in the Mediterranean 17 submarines, for whose identification. see. *ibid*, p. 385-387

(38) OFFICE HISTORY OF MARINA: *Le navi di linea italiane*, Rome 1969, p. 332 and p. 336-337.

(39) OFFICE HISTORY OF MARINA: *Gli incrociatori italiani*, Rome 1964, p. 470 and p. 520.

(40) We quote only by way of example those who remind us of the conduct of the Japanese Navy, but it has left written at about the Zingali: "To protect some fuel steamships directed to Africa (where there was no reason for us to go to test ourselves) warships were sent to the slaughterhouse; and now, to defend the soil of the Homeland, it was being created a political asset of the vessels, for times and the best opportunities." See. G. Zingali: *L'invasione della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 221. Equally critical were, in the same Navy, Admiral R. Bernotti: *Storia della guerra nel Mediterraneo*, Rome 1960, pp. 294-295 and Admiral A. Iachino: *Tramonto di una grande Marina*, Milano , 1959, p. 307-310.

interpretation of the facts, represented in the eyes of many a valuable sounding and currency exchange⁽⁴¹⁾. This conclusion comes even Carlo De Risio in his not far although forgotten very critical book with the Italian Navy, where he admits that the backbone of our fleet, *"engaged initially as Fleet in being as fleet in being, finally became currency exchange in the armistice negotiations"*⁽⁴²⁾.

But we see the evolution of events in the marine sector. The June 24, 1943 Supermarina, with the memorandum 19049S/RP directed to the Supreme Command, maintained that the ranking of likely future enemy targets was as follows: Trapani - Sciacca, Cagliari - Sant'Antioco, Syracuse⁽⁴³⁾.

As has already been pointed out, the alleged multiplicity of possible enemy targets, coupled with almost daily variability of the emerging views in this regard in the various Axis Strategic Commands, not only hindered a concentration, also relative, the Italian-German reactive forces but it ended up feeding indecision and even a deleterious effect emulation in the field of forecasting. There is, therefore, he found himself immersed in a dangerous game of divination, by which ended up being made the most absurd predictions, such as those already mentioned of the Supreme Command of 18 and 22 June and 1 and 3 July 1943.

However, Supermarina, in continuing indecision on the Anglo-American objectives, promised at that June 1943 that the battle fleet would intervene *"to the extreme character action in case of any attack on the sacred soil of the homeland, knowing to deal with a great superiority of the enemy and not be able to rely on appropriate air cover, nor on a sufficient escort of light ships"*.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Indeed at 09:45 on July 10, the Chief of the Royal Navy G.S. of Adm. Riccardi, assured the German O.B.S. that, in the fleet was ready to sail at 15:00, and at 10:20 Superaereo with

(41) See. "Illustrated History", Milan, August and September 1982; M. TOSCANO: *Sondaggi italiani per uscire dal conflitto prima della caduta di Mussolini*, in the "Clio", April 1965, and "Maritime Magazine", Rome. February 1982, p. 66.

(42) C. DE RISIO: *Navi di ferro, teste di legno: la Marina italiana ieri e oggi*, Rome 1976, p. 22,

(43) G. Fioravanzo: *Situazione e impiego della Manna italiana nel periodo compreso tra lo sbarco in Africa Settentrionale e lo sbarco in Sicilia*, Centro Alti Studi Militari, Roma 1951/52.

(44) A. IACHINO: *Tramonto di una grande Marina*, op. cit., p. 305,

telegram 13220, stable to provide the Naval Fleet of La Spezia three fighter groups, each with a number fifteen - twenty aircraft. Also at 11:40 the O.B.S. He asked to be informed in output time to the sea of the Italian fleet in order to appropriately and promptly used, its fighter aircraft. But by noon the Supreme Command, with a phone call from Gen. Ambrosio and Adm. Riccardi, did not authorize the operation of more of the battle fleet. In this regard Gen. Rossi, Chief of G.S. of the Army, he wrote that it was for the considerations expressed by Supermarina "*that the Supreme Command, accepted the renounce the use of the battle fleet proposal of the Chief of G.S. of the Navy*" ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The consequent energetic protests of Adm. Donitz. of 12 July Supermarina replied three days later, denying that existed then "*the right conditions*" to the judicious use of the Italian fleet and thereby corroborating the interpretation of Gen. Rossi.

For their part, some historical allies were of the opinion that "*the Italian Navy had avoided until then the battle with great determination, but now, in defense of the metropolitan soil, it had to either fight or give up forever its pretense to power in the Mediterranean*" ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

5. THE ANGLO-AMERICAN FORCES AND THEIR GOALS (See. Map no. 6)

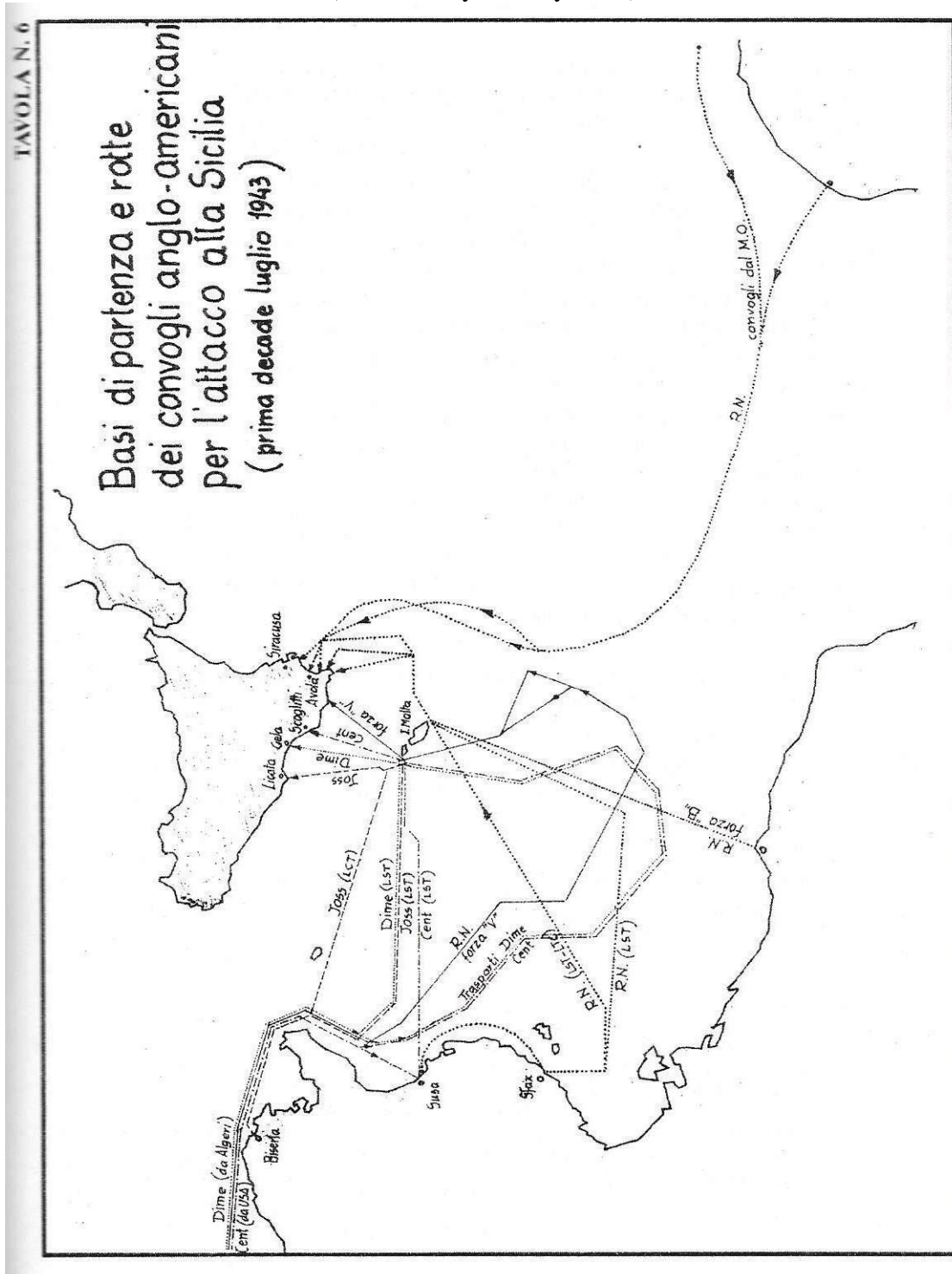
The responsibility to conduct the operation HUSKY was entrusted, as we have seen, to General Eisenhower, top Allied commander in the Mediterranean, which had under him the British Gen. Alexander, commander of the Anglo-American ground forces gathered in the XV Army Group, English Adm. Cunningham, commander of the Allied naval forces, and the British Air Marshal Tedder, commander of the Allied air units ⁽⁴⁷⁾.

(45) F. ROSSI: *Come arrivammo all'armistizio*, Milano 1946, p. 35

(46) E. LINKLATER: *The campaign in Italy*, op. cit. p. 23.

(47) The general plan of HUSKY and the various operational and informational instructions for the XV Army Group are kept in P.R.O. background WO 204. 4259 folder: *War of 1939-1945. Military Headquarters Papers. Allied force Headquarters. «Husky» orders and folder 4363: Sicily: notes on the planning and assault.*

Starting points and routes of Anglo-American convoys for the attack on Sicily.
(First ten days in July 1943)



The XV of Army Group of Gen. Alexander was composed by the British 8th Army of Gen. Montgomery and the US 7th Army of Gen. Patton. Let us examine separately these two major units.

The 8th Army of Gen. Montgomery, helped on the sea by Adm. Ramsay and in the heavens by Vice Air Marshal Broadhurst, it was composed by the XIII Army Corps of Gen. Dempsey and XXX Corps of Gen. Leese. The XIII Corps. It was formed by the 5th Inf. Div. of Gen. Berney-Ficklin and 50th Inf. Div. of Gen. Kirkman, both from the Middle: East. The XXX Corps was made up of the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. of Gen. Simonds, by the Scottish 51st Inf. Div. of Gen. Wimberley and the 231st "Malta" Brigade of Gen. Urquhart, respectively coming from Britain, Tunisia and Suez.

Units reporting directly to the British 8th Army were the 4th and 23rd Armored Brigades from Tripoli to the respective orders of Generals Currie and Richards, 1st Airborne Division of Gen. Hopkinson, from El Diem and finally the SAS unit and n. 3rd, 40th and 41st *Commandos* of the Royal Marines. The reserves were represented instead by the 46th and 78th Inf. Div. of Generals Hawkesworth and Eveleigh⁽⁴⁸⁾.

The US 7th Army of Gen. Patton, helped on the sea by Adm. Hewitt and in the heavens by Gen. Doolittle, was formed only by the II Corps of General Bradley, in turn composed of the 1st Inf. Div. of Gen. Allen, by the 3rd Inf. Div. of Gen. Truscott (from Algeria and Tunisia) by the 45th Inf. Div. of Gen. Middleton (from the US), by the 2nd Armored Division of Gen. Gaffey (shipped from Grano), three battalions of Rangers and the 4th Moroccan Tabor (battalion) aggregated by the French Gen. Giraud January to the American 3rd Div.⁽⁴⁹⁾.

(48) The S.A.S. (Special Air Service) have units of *commandos* specially trained for exploratory actions and coups and have the motto "Who dares wins" from which it was made into a movie recently. Their shined action on 5 May 1980 that realized the liberation of the Iranian Embassy hostages in London and daring raids during the recent Falklands war in April. June 1982 made them famous and admired all over the world.

(49) See. "Revue Historique de l'Armée", year 1961, n. 2: *Le 4 Tabor marocain en Sicilie*. The 4th Tabor, commanded by Capt. Verlet, was composed of 58 French soldiers (12 officers, 44 NCOs and 2 enlisted men), by 832 Moroccans (154 NCO and 678 enlisted men) and 241 pack animals. It landed at Licata on July 13.

The Army Reserve units were the 82nd Airborne Division of General Ridgway and 9th Inf. Div. of Gen. Eddy.

In total the Allies were about to employ against Sicily 181,000 men, divided into 115,000 British and 66,000 US ⁽⁵⁰⁾, as well as 600 tanks, 14,000 trucks, 1,800 guns and 3,462 aircraft belonging to 267 squadrons, including 146 Americans and 121 British ⁽⁵¹⁾. However, this mass of only 2,510 were efficient aircraft and operationally employable and only 670 aircraft were used by Allied front-line in direct support to landings. It was finally determined that the total men of the XV Army Group involved in the operation "HUSKY" were eventually 478,000, of which 250,000 British and 228,000 Americans ⁽⁵²⁾.

The first units to go into action shortly before midnight on July 9 were Anglo-Americans paratroopers. First of all the 1,600 men of the British 1st Airborne Brigade of Gen. Hicks with the goal as the "Big Bridge" on the lower course of the Anapo, behind Syracuse. So the 3,405 American paratroopers of the 505th battle group of Col. Gavin and III Battalion of the 504th Regiment belonging to the 82nd Airborne Division, which had as its objective the so-called "Piano Lupo" south of Niscemi and the crossroads of the road of this town and the roadway no. 115, seven kilometers behind the landing beaches of Gela ⁽⁵³⁾.

Much debated was the launch system and the end the paratroopers were dropped instead of the American method in compact formations, according to the British tactic "in pairs of planes flying at one and a half minute intervals. This fear of anti-aircraft defense that the Allied information service erroneously deemed very focused.

(50) G.A. SHEPPERD: *The Italian campaign 1943-1945*, London 1968, p. 27

(51) D. RICHARDS -H.G. SAUNDERS: *Royal Air Force 1939-1945*, vol. II, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1954 Italian translation by the S.M.E., Office Library Historical Army, ranking 52/378, p. 459

(52) M.M. BLUMENSON: *Sicily: whose victory?*, London 1969, p. 45 and B.H. LIDDELL HART: *Stona militare della seconda guerra mondiale*, op. cit., p. 619,

(53) In the first phase of HUSKY planning was also examined a launch of paratroopers on the tip of Calabria, so as to cut off the enemy supply route across the Strait of Messina. However, this project was abandoned in April 1943 in favor of a unitary lot more close support to amphibious troops landing in Sicily by the available paratroopers. See. HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V cit, p. 27.

The landing from the sea, preceded by the landing of the British *Commandos* on Cape Murra di Porco: was scheduled for 02:45 hours of July 10, according to the following breakdown.

THE AMERICAN ATTACK FORCE WEST of Adm. Hewitt was responsible for carrying out and protect the landing of the 7th Army of General Patton on the west coast of the southern tip of Sicily, between Torre di Gaffe and Punta Braccetto. He commanded 580 ships including warships and landing ships and 1,124 embarked amphibious vehicles. The paratroopers to be transported to the ground on a front of 79 kilometers had gathered on these three columns from west to east, in addition to two reserve groups.

- T.F. 86, or column "Joss", of Adm. Conolly, that would have landed three regimental tactical groups of 3rd Inf. Div. of Gen. Truscott and a Rangers Battalion with a goal of Licata and then the Salso Valley. It set out from Bizerte and aligned to the escort and fire support of the cruisers *Birmingham* and *Brooklyn* and nine destroyers well as a command ship, 8 minesweepers, 33 patrol boats and 202 landing ships.

- T.F. 81, or column "Dime", of Adm. Hall, who would have landed two regimental tactical groups of the 1st Inf. Div. of Gen. Allen and two Rangers Battalion goal of Gela and then the Ponte Olivo airport. It sailed from Algiers and fielded for the escort and fire support of the cruisers *Bolse* and *Savannah* and 10 destroyers in addition to the command ship *Monrovia* of Adm. Hewitt, 8 minesweepers, 10 patrol boats and 45 transports and large landing ships.

- T.F. 85, or column "Cent", of Adm. Kirk, that would have landed three regimental tactical groups of the 45th Inf. Div. of Gen. Middleton with goal of Scoglitti and then the airports of Comiso and of Biscari, departing from the United States, moved to Oran and aligned to the escort and fire support the cruiser *Philadelphia*, the British monitor *Abercrombie* and 19 destroyers, in addition to a command ship, 16 minesweeper., 4 patrol vessels and 46 transport and large landing ships.

- Reserve Embarked, or column, "Kool", Capt. Reed, with two regiments of the 2nd Armored Division of Gen. Gaffey and 18th Regimental Tactical Group of the 1st Inf. Div., ready to make a landing between the columns "Joss" and "Dime".

General -Reserve including the 9th Inf. Div. of Gen. Eddy, on alert in North Africa.

The American forces used belonged, as was said, the II Corps of Gen. Bradley and, after the conquest of the airports, should have protected the left the advance towards Messina of the British 8th Army. The facts, as we shall see, however, took a different course.

THE ENGLISH EASTERN ATTACK FORCE of Adm. Ramsay, stronger than 818 warships and landing ships and 715 embarked amphibious vehicles, was in charge of transporting and landing the British 8th Army of Gen. Montgomery of five beaches ranging, with some intervals, from Punta Castelluzzo to Capo Ognina , and to protect a *Commandos* raid on the Magdalene peninsula south of Syracuse. The front of British landing had a total length of 78 km, divided into two zones of 34 kilometers (XXX Corps). and 20 kilometers (XIII Corps) separated by a 24 km area. This British front was located 55 kilometers east of the American front shown above. Overall six British landing beaches were from west to northeast the following.

- "Bark Western ", between Punta Castelluzzo and Punta delle Formiche, where the attack force "V" of Adm. Vian had initially landed the 1st and 2nd Brigade of the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. of the thirty-nine year old Gen. Simonds*, as well as the 40th and 41st *Commandos* of Gen. Laycock, primary objectives were the Pachino airport and contact with the right wing of the American "Cent" column.

- "Bark Southern" in Portopalo Bay, right on the extreme southern tip of Sicily, where the attack force "B" of Amm. McGrigor had initially landed the 154th Scottish Brigade of the 51st Highlands Inf. Div. of Gen. Wimberley, followed by the 152nd Brigade with the goal of the town of Pachino.

- "Bark Eastern", between Capo Passero and Marzamemi, where the small attack force "M" of Capt. Ashbourne had to disembark the 231st "Malta" Infantry Brigade of Gen. Urquhart with the goal of the hinterland of the same Marzamemi.

- "Acid south", between Calabernardo and Punta Giorgi, where the force of attack "A" of Adm. Troubridge had initially landed the 151st Brigade of the 50th Inf. Div. of Gen. Kirkman with Avola and Noto as objectives.

*He was born in April 1903 so he was Forty.

- "Acid north", between Punta Giorgi and Capo Ognina, where always the attack force of "A" of Adm. Troubridge had initially landed the 15th and the 17th brigade of the 5th Inf. Div. of Gen. Berney - Ficklin with the goal of Cassibile.

-Penisola Maddalena, north of Capo Murro di Porco, where the 3rd *Commando* of Col. Slater and two S.A.S. units of Maj. Mayne had the task of supporting the activities of the paratroopers on the lower course of the Anapo.

The "Bark" areas both Western, Southern and Eastern that were the responsibility of the XXX Army Corps of Gen. Leese, while the forces deployed in the two "Acid" areas belonged to XIII Corps of Gen. Dempsey. The Army Reserve was finally established by the 78th Inf. Div. of Gen. Eveleigh.

The task of the entire known British Army was to go north, occupying in succession Syracuse, Augusta and Messina, having the left flank covered by the US 7th Army, in order to trap on the island as many of the Italian-German troops as possible. As we shall see, this goal was not reached.

The entire Anglo-American expeditionary force would be carried by 22 convoys under the responsibility of Adm. Cunningham, from which depended the examined amphibious fleets of Admirals Hewitt and Ramsay, as well as the coverage forces of the Admirals Willis and Harcourt. All this amounted to 2,590 ships, including 1,614 British, 945 US, 10 Dutch, 9 Polish, 7 Greek, 4 Norwegian and 1 Belgian⁽⁵⁴⁾.

In particular this mass of naval units consisted of 1,742 ships and landing transport from LSI, LST, LSG, LCT, LCI and Dukws, 237 transport ships, 86 logistics ships of various types and 525 warships. These were supported by six battleships and two aircraft carriers all British, 15 cruisers, 4 anti-aircraft ships, 3 monitors, 128 destroyers, 36 between frigates and corvettes, 5 gunboats, 4 minelayer, 42 minesweepers, 26 submarines, 243 torpedo boats, motor gun boats and lookouts, 9 headquarters command ships and two planes guide ships⁽⁵⁵⁾.

(54) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit. p. 30.

(55) The six British battleships were the *Nelson* (flagship Willis), the *Rodney*, *Warspite*, *Valiant*, *Howe* and *King George V* and the two British carriers were the *Formidable* and *Indomitable*. See. A.B. CUNNINGHAM: *L'odissea di un marinaio*, Milano 1952, p. 409.

Air forces assigned to the English Air Marshal Tedder amounted, as we have said, to 3,462 aircraft, of which 2,510 operational and were divided into strategic part (American Gen. Spaatz) and a tactical part (British Air Marshal Coningham). However we repeat that the first-line aircraft used by the Anglo-Americans in direct support of the landings were 670 to be precise.

* * *

At the end of this summary of the Allied forces involved in the operation HUSKY, it seems necessary to mention another their advantage, not obvious at first glance, but very substantial. It was the general superiority of the Anglo-American infantry divisions in terms of firepower on the corresponding German-Italian divisions deployed in Sicily. In this regard it can be said that, apart from the greater number of infantry battalions and typically framed men in an allied division compared to those of an Italian division, the number of individual automatic and unit weapons, mortars and antitank pieces allies was at least a third higher. Not to mention the great disproportion in wheeled vehicles and especially tracked, the latter including both the tanks, both self-propelled artillery and of "halftrack" to transport troops.

English infantry divisions, usually 13,700 actual, included three brigades of infantry, each aligned approximately 2,500 men and was divided into three battalions. Beyond that were included in the British division three groups of field artillery, each with 25 pieces and 670 men, a group of antitank artillery, a machine gun Battalion, a recon Battalion with 78 tanks and 650 men, three engineering companies with 240 men each and various services. Occasionally some of these smaller units were aggregated to the divisional personnel of a brigade, forming the so-called "brigade group" autonomous field body, equal to a American regimental battlegroup which we will discuss shortly. English armored brigades were instead composed of two regiments and the tank were framed within the corps.

American infantry divisions met on average actual 15,500 and their staff was as follows: three infantry regiments, each of three battalions with 3,000-3,500 men, a

artillery regiment divided into four groups with 72 pieces and 2,500 men, a Battalion. Engineers with 650-750 men, a group exploring with 150-200 men, a transmissions company, Services unit and a large health unit of about 500 employees, which together with the Medical Services aggregates to small individual units carrying the staff of the divisional health corps to the respectable figure of a thousand men

The main armament of the American infantry division in mid-1943 included 7,000 Garand and Winchester rifles of caliber 7.62 mm. semi-automatic operation, 150- 200 Browning machine guns or machine guns of the same caliber, 113-237 12.7 mm machine guns., 81-90 mortars 60 mm., 36-57 mortars 81 mm., 550 anti-tank bazookas, 60 -100 antitank guns, 60 howitzers and 75 105 mm., 12 155 mm howitzers and 1,800-2,000 vehicles⁽⁵⁶⁾.

American armored divisions, formed in September 1940 and restructured in March 1942, included 14,620 men, 54 105 mm howitzers, 390 tanks and self-propelled. They were organized in two tank regiments, a regiment of infantry and an artillery regiment (all three battalions), an engineering battalion and a group exploring. A new law in 1943 reduced the number of men to 10,937 and that of tanks to 263.

Finally a few words deserves the RCT (Regimental Combat Team) who meet under the name of regimental tactical group. This unit was based on an infantry regiment, reinforced by an armored recon unit, by artillery, by the Corps of Engineers and by the Services, which made him a tactically complex autonomous and self-sufficient.

(56) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Special studies. The organization of ground combat troops*, Washington 1947. pp. 274-275,

CHAPTER V

THE FALL OF PANTELLERIA AND LAMPEDUSA AND THE PREPARATORY PHASE OF "HUSKY"

1. THE DEFENSES OF PANTELLERIA AND AIR ATTACKS ON THE ISLAND

(See. Map n. 7)

The only example in history of a fortified island surrendered by only enemy air power was the one from Pantelleria which, as we mentioned, was overseen by the General Staff of the Royal Navy, like the southernmost Pelagic islands of Lampedusa, Linosa and Lampione .

Pantelleria, a volcanic island of 83 square kilometers, that is 114 km from Sicily, 70 km from Tunisia and 220 kilometers from Malta, rises above sea level to a maximum height of 836 meters in the so-called Big Mountain, surrounded in turn by various heights and adventitious volcanic cones, locally are called the "Cuddie"). The natural vegetation is Mediterranean, replaced here and there by vineyards.

In May 1943 Pantelleria was inhabited by about 12,000 residents and was defended by a total of 420 officers, 620 non-commissioned officers and 10,617 enlisted men ⁽¹⁾. The commander of the island, was overseen by the Supermarina through the Independent Military Maritime Command of Sicily, commanded by Admiral Pavesi, assisted by his Chief of G.S., Frigate Capt. Cavana.

The local Milmart (Militia of maritime artillery) had available twenty-two batteries divided as follows: three 152/45 (12 guns), three 120/50 (13 guns) and a 76/40 anti-ship (4 guns), as well as two of 90/53 (12 guns) and thirteen of 76/40 (72 guns) dual purpose. For anti-aircraft and close defense

(1) A.U.S.E., IT 1152A folder: Pantelleria 4/124 sheet of June 12, 1943.

There were also 23 - 20 mm. machine guns, 18 - 13.2 mm., 19 - 8 mm. and 50 by 6.5 mm. ⁽²⁾.

The elements of the Army, under the command of Gen. Miliei, consisted of three infantry battalions, one of which had motor transport, by a mixed brigade command company, thirteen autonomous machine gun companies, three special companies (total 32 pieces of 47 mm., 36 pieces of 45 mm., 543 machine guns and 108 heavy machine guns), a mortar company of 81 mm. with six pieces, a autonomous Lt tank company with 13 tanks, from the CL mixed artillery group with 4 pieces of 65/17 and 4 pieces of 75/27, by a Engineers mixed company and four companies of workers and artisans. Finally, there was on the island a German radar station located in Monte Croce served by 78 German soldiers. For the breakdown of the workforce, see the appendix (appendix no. 9).

Pantelleria was then famous for its airport built at 180 meters above sea level, with underground hangar in reinforced concrete, which measured m. 302 x 26 and had a height of 16 m.. Although the services were well protected, part concrete and part in the cave. The island's air force, under the command of Col. Raverdino, had a force of 60 fighters, but these were partly destroyed rising against the bombing and partly withdrawn, so that, as we shall see, they remained on the island until June 3 only four MC 202 ⁽³⁾.

The island was completely dependent on supplies by sea and the date of 25 May 1943 the food self-sufficiency for the people and the Armed Forces was calculated in thirty days, while at the moment of surrender (June 11) it was at 14-15 days ⁽⁴⁾. The provisions were set aside in a cave depots, as were two underground ammunition depots, a fuel, a power plant, a mill and an electric oven.

The water was taken from three wells of Lo Pinto, Errera and Valencia, with individual issues of about 200 cubic meters

(2) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, file.4 "Excerpt of the report of Admiral Angelo Iachino"

(3) According to Gen. Sanrore these four fighters remained in Pantelleria acted only until last days of May, that is contradicted by official documents. See. C ;. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, Op. cit., vol. II, p. 536.

(4) This also expressed the quoted report of Adm. Iachino in A.U.S.E., 012 folder, file 4.

daily, also there were many of rainwater collection tanks, but almost dry in that season, while each battery was equipped with a tank of 50 cubic meters, provided with day purification filters. The Army had finally 58 metal tanks of 500, 1,000 and 1,420 liters. The main problem, however, was formed by the distribution of drinking water, entrusted to the scarce water tankers along the modest and targeted island roads ⁽⁵⁾.

The strategic location of Pantelleria made it a target area by the British, who in fact, as we have already mentioned, had planned to invade it since October 1940 with an *Commando* action call operation WORKSHOP ⁽⁶⁾. This bold plan was shelved in December to make way for the aforementioned first project of invasion of Sicily called INFLUX, Then thwarted by troops rushing to the sky and by Germans landing in Sicily itself ⁽⁷⁾.

In the new situation of 1943 Pantelleria represented a great advance base for the Allies for their fighter aircraft, ahead of the launch of the final operation HUSKY, and its conquest would have eliminated the local German radar station. Also not escaped the allied planners the value of the island as the location of weather stations and rescue services, and the ability to turn it into an emergency landing area for damaged bomber aircraft.

Despite the recognized advantages, however, the conviction to meet stiff resistance from the numerous and well-armed garrison and to unveil the enemy's intention to invade Sicily, did discuss at length the military responsible for the Anglo-American ⁽⁸⁾. Finally on 10 May 1943 it was decided to make the landing and conquest of Pantelleria (Operation CORKSCREW) for June 11, the last day of a period of suitable night light conditions before the planned invasion of Sicily.

In the night between 10 and 11 Mays was established by the British a close watch around the island by motor torpedo boats, which

(5) Passenger cars, trucks, vans, tankers, motorcycles and special amounted to to 119 vehicles, however, affected by the shortage of spare parts.

(6) P.R.O. background ADM 205, folder 11.

(7) P.R.O. background PREM 3, folder 234: "*Influx operation (invasion of Sicily), December 1940 - February 1941*".

(8) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy* op cit., Pp. 69.70.

however, did not prevent that by the 16th of the month arrived for the defenders 657 tons of supplies. So on May 18, five days after the fall of Tunisia, began on Pantelleria of a massive air campaign, while cruisers and destroyers performed a series of bombardments from the sea 1st, 2, 3, 5 and 8 June. The British official report we know that from mid-May to 11 June, the day of the surrender of Pantelleria, were poured 6,400 tons of bombs on the island in over 5,218 sorties, in addition to rainfall of naval shells ⁽⁹⁾. Against it the Allies lost in this air campaign a total of 15 aircraft, however, destroying 47 of the Axis.

The air offensive against Pantelleria can be divided into two periods, the first of which, between 18 and 30 May, he saw forty predominantly daytime raids which caused few casualties (13 dead and 26 wounded among civilians and military), but serious damage to electrical equipment and logistics systems. The second period, which lasted until to 11 June, ie the island's surrender, was instead characterized by a good 194 raids, mostly concentrated in the last few days of the offensive. Among other things a bomb penetrated the through the entrance and underground hangars, but without exploding, with subsequent relief of the same British, who were thus able to "use that hangar in continuation after the occupation of the island," as it is written in the official report of the RAF ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Meanwhile on June 1 the Supreme Command had given Supermarina, Superaereo and O.B. S., With telegram n. 41394/op, the rules to determined defense of Pantelleria and the Pelagie Islands " ⁽¹¹⁾.

Two days later Gen. Ambrosio ordered the three General Staffs of the Armed Forces to provide for the supply of the besieged island by all means, even with air drops, then recommending that the aircraft that landed on Pantelleria they evacuate civilians in the return journey. The same June 3rd the Supreme Command, as we have already mentioned, ordered "*the transfer to Sicily of the fighter section still located on the island of Pantelleria*"⁽¹²⁾.

(9) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*. Vol. Cit., P. 49 note.

(10) D. RICHARDS -H.G. SAUNDERS: *Royal Air Force 1939-1945*, vol. II, H.M.S.O. Italian translation by the S.M.E., p 461.

(11) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder, telegram n. 41394 / op of the Supreme Command dated June 1, 1943, The Axis air forces responded to this appeal in defense of Panrelleria employing between 1 and 10 June a day total 323 Italian and 455 German fighters.

(12) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder, telegrams n. 00656 / UT, 00675 / UT and 51056 / op of 3 June 1943.

Again on June 6. Ambrosio reminded Superaereo the need to make the maximum effort to supply Pantelleria also for moral reasons, while I understand the risks of aerial supply ⁽¹³⁾. In fact on that same night an Sm, 82 effected an airdrop supplies, what originated a great pleasure to be part of Gen. Ambrosio. In this regard, please note that in addition to this isolated air landing, between 1 and June 10 landed at Pantelleria twelve Italians three-engined cargo Sm. 81 and thirty German three-engined Ju, 52 to transport urgent supplies of ammunition and water ⁽¹⁴⁾. Finally, on June 7 the Water Tanker *Amo* had arrived on the island with 130 tons of water ⁽¹⁵⁾.

For its part, Royal Navy thought of following DI.NA. 12 (Naval Directive 12) which did not involve the use of surface ships in defense of Pantelleria. I supermarna not even considered appropriate to the use of submarines and simply send in the waters of the island three Motor Torpedo Boats, who arrived there with eleven German Motor Torpedo Boats ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Both the 8 to 10 June the British dropped on the island leaflets containing intimations of surrender, but in both cases the Pantelleria Command refused the offer, confirming in Rome that would resist to the bitter end ⁽¹⁷⁾. In response to this gesture Mussolini, through the Supreme Command, he sent to Adm. Pavesi the following eulogy just twelve hours before the then unexpected capitulation ⁽¹⁸⁾.

"Comes to you and to the garrison my lively praise. The Pantelleria garrison's heroic resistance adds new laurel to Italian arms. Mussolini. "

2 THE SURRENDER OF PANTELLERIA

During the day of 8 June the High Command insistently asked Supermarina, Superaereo and O.B.S. to "Concentrate

(13) *Ibid*, telegram from the Supreme Command No. 51112 / op of 6 June 1943.

(14) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, file 4: "Excerpt of the report of Adm. Angelo Iachino. ", P. 23 and G.

SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II cited. p. 537-538.

(15) A.U.S.E., *ibid* and S. ATTANASIO: *Sicilia senza Italia*. op. cit., p. 60.

(16) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, file 4, "Excerpt from the report of Adm. Angelo Iachino. ", P. 22.

(17) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder, telegram no. 43543 of 14.30 on 8 June 1943, and EN folder 1152A, phonogram 32406 of 13.00 on June 10, 1943.

(18) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder and the folder IT 1152A, telegram of the Supreme Command No. 41483 / op of 22:40 hours of June 10, 1943.

all the means available for the assistance to the defense of Pantelleria, that in the moment must be the main task" and "to communicate emergency measures ordered (19).

In fact on that day three torpedo bombers and eight Italian fighter-bombers, with a total escort of thirty-eight fighters, attempted to attack an English naval division of five cruisers and eight destroyers, that was targeting the island along with a hundred aircraft. On that occasion the pilots of torpedo bombers claimed to have hit two cruisers and forcing the enemy ships to move away, while the Italian fighter "*would remain masters of the sky*" (20). Today we do know that those Italian torpedo bombers "were forced to return before they have been able to spot the ships, because they run out autonomy of the fighter escort" (21). Actually that day no English units was hit either by the Italian aircraft or from those of the German II *Fliegerkorps*, who employed against the same targets in the waters of Pantelleria 34 bombers escorted by 57 fighters.

During the 9th and June 10th it was on the skies of Pantelleria another Axis air missions, mostly German, but all remained equally without success, as more and more intense became the Allied bombers pressure on the island. Always according to the abovementioned report of Adm. Iachino mandated to carry out an investigation into the facts that occurred on the evening of June 9 when was still efficient on Pantelleria 80% of the anti-ship batteries and 48.25% of those anti-aircraft (22).

At 03:40 to 10 June Admiral Pavesi sent to Supermarina a very important report on the situation, also received by the armed forces command of Sicily at 07:50. In it the Pantelleria Command ensured, among other things, that, even though the local mill having been destroyed and some unused deposits of

(19) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder, dispatches of the Supreme Command No. 41452/41454 and op / op June 8, 1943.

(20) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, file 4 cited.

(21) G. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II cit., Pag.537.

(22) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, file 4, "Adm Excerpt from the report. Angelo Iachino. ", P. 24.

food, the remaining flour would be sufficient for another ten days. Even more significant were the news on water availability, a problem which has provoked much discussion historians. In fact, after having notified that the water came through day aircraft was not drinkable because polluted by gasoline and that the difficulty of trucking hampered the distribution of water that came with the water tanker *Amo*, Admiral Pavesi explicitly stated in that on June 10, the eve of the yield there was *"enough water up to four days."*⁽²³⁾

In confirmation of the above, came in the same day Supermarina the telegram no. 10883 broadcast at 08:20 by Superaereo in which, after recalling that three Sm.81 had transported the island 4,700 kilograms of ammunition and medicines and that seven Germans Ju.52 had dumped water on the island, and 800 kilograms of ammunition, concluded:

"Pantelleria says that he no longer needs water, but most of ammunition"⁽²⁴⁾.

Among other things at 22:00 that on June 10, in response to another order of Mussolini to supply the island by any means, five German three-engined Ju. 52 carried out a launch of aerial supply⁽²⁵⁾. This also following a new evening phonogram Adm. Pavesi, with whom he denounced the local difficulties for the supply of ammunition, food and water and for the transport of the wounded and yes expressed confidence about the ability to cope with any enemy landing⁽²⁶⁾.

On June 11, the day of the surrender of Pantelleria, the events followed one another with increasing intensity and some even overlapping, causing some confusion in some reports of facts arrived up to us.

The first significant telegram was the one sent by Adm.

(23) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder and IT 1152A folder. pages 4/57 and 4/84, phonogram of Pantelleria Command No. 50069 of June 10, 1943.

(24) A.U.S.E., folder 11.52A. pages 4/58 and 4/85: the Superaereo telegram n. 10883 of June 10, 1943.

(25) *Ibid*, 4/35 sheet. For this last order of Mussolini see. 1444 directory, telegram of the Supreme Command n. 41485 / op of 10 June 1943.

(26) A.U.S.E., IT 1152A folder, sheets 4/64 and 4/85: phonogram of Pantelleria Command No. 55443 of June 10, 1943.

Pavesi to 03:45, which also signaled the "very painful conditions of the civilian population for lack of food, water and adequate shelter" and called the "moral energy of the armed forces weakened from absolute impotence to fight and defend themselves." The island's commander then concluded bitterly: "In conscious responsibility to many human lives it is my sad duty to declare that all possibilities of resistance are exhausted" ⁽²⁷⁾.

Meanwhile the Allied air and naval forces intensified their pressure, launching on Pantelleria on that day of 11 June other 440 tons explosive, while a contingent landing from the English 1st Inf. div of Gen. Clutterbuck, divided into three echelons, and sailed from Sousse and Sfax, he approached to deliver the decisive blow.

This last naval force, the British admiral orders McGrigor, was composed of a drive command, five amphibious ships, thirty-eight landing craft, five destroyers, a gunboat, four minesweepers, four trawlers and two motor launches. The British however, as we shall see, they ended up landing an hour after the island's surrender.

Pressed by circumstances and obviously concerned with saving the honor of Italian arms, Mussolini, at 10:10 on the 11th, made by the Supreme Command to send to Supermarina on Pantelleria, to Superaereo and to the O.B.S. the following fundamental telegram n. 41490/op, which suggested the surrender only be attributed to the lack of water on the fortified island ⁽²⁸⁾.

"Given the impossibility of drinking water supplies the island's population & garrison I order you to inform Malta Command with telegram to that plea & only for it starting at 12:00 hours today to cease resistance. You and your subordinates have all done your duty. For your work as Commander there is conferred on the field the Cross of Knight of the O.M.S. - Mussolini. "

This telegram, however, was relayed by Supermarina Adm. Pavesi only at 12:55, when the order made by Mussolini should have already have been declared for almost an hour. Also, maybe to overcome this delay, the above telegram of Mussolini was sent from Supermarina and transmitted to Pantelleria in the following way ⁽²⁹⁾.

(27) *Ibid*, pages 4/65, 4/66 and 4/85.

(28) *Ibid*, pages 4 / 68,4 / 107, 4/108, and 4/110: telegram from the Supreme Command, signed by Mussolini, n. 41490 / op of 10.10 am on 11 June 1943.

(29) *Ibid* 4/40 sheet: Supermarina telegram to Pantelleria No. 63495 of 12:55 hours on 11 June 1943.

"Given the inability to supply drinking water to the Island population & garrison I'm ordered to inform you when you judge to clearly telegram Malta Command for the above reason and alone for it, from the hour that you establish and that you communicate, you will cease resistance. For your work will be conferred on the field Commander the Knight's Cross Military Order of Savoy. Mussolini."

As you can see, the differences between the original telegram of Mussolini n. 41490/op and the one actually transmitted by Supermarina to Pantelleria with n. 63495 was not therefore only the timetable forwarded, already delayed by about an hour after the time at which the island, according to the orders of the leader, would have to surrender (12.00). In fact the phonogram of Supermarina, despite having been issued in Mussolini's signature, also changed the content and conditions, omitting the full sentence of praise to the defenders and giving Adm. Pavesi an unexpected choice of when to give up and ask for that you make it effective. Last consequent mismatch was then to impose on Pavesi himself the task of communicating to Rome the "chosen" surrender time, order that Mussolini had not intended to address, since for him the cessation of the resistance was to take place at 12.00 hours precisely.

However, these strange contradictions and discrepancies had no practical consequence, since Adm. Pavesi had rendered superfluous every order of surrender, having already decided independently to cease resistance. starting at 11:00, that is, long before he had received the above order of the leader who was manipulated and that in any case he wished to yield at 12:00. In fact, at 11:25 Admiral Pavesi was well informed⁽³⁰⁾:

"I'm still under bombardment with aircraft & ships. At 11:00 I have given orders to signal surrender. Long live Italy ".

This statement was also intercepted by the Naval Command of Messina at 12:05 ⁽³¹⁾, but both the German O.B.S. and that of Gen. Monti of Air Force Command of Sicily came to know it almost immediately. In fact, at 11:10 the

(31) *Ibid*, 4/29 sheet, prot. 248 / C.5.

(32) *Ibid*, 4/134 sheet, prot. 4028.

Gen. Monti communicated by telephone from Catania to Gen. Santoro, Chief of the G.S. of the Air Force, that "the Germans had learned that Pantelleria at 11:00, had raised the white flag" ⁽³²⁾.

Even before receiving the famous and delayed phonogram of Supermarina n. 63495 of 12:55, Adm. Pavese issued clearly at 12:10 the following new and longest record No. 0528 concerning his decision to cease the resistance ⁽³³⁾.

"Pantelleria garrison resisted as much as humanly possible. Inability any reaction requires me hard necessity to cease resistance. At 11:00 am I gave order to send the yield signal. Viva Italy. Mediterranean outpost turn our greeting to the dear homeland. We have taken up duty in the certainty of the final victory. Warn families that all subjective Pantelleria r.t. stations are safe. Viva Italy. Viva Italy. Long live Italy ".

As you can see, finally, Adm. Pavese made in his above-mentioned two messages made no appeal to the lack of water, which Mussolini had instead suggested as the only reason for the capitulation.

* * *

An interesting example of what event immediately after the decision Adm. Pavese today cease resistance of Pantelleria at 11:00 of that of 11 June 1943 is given by a series of recorded telephone communications between Gen. Monti of Sicily Air Force Command based in Catania and Gen. Santoro, Chief of the G.S. of the Air Force in Rome. Here is the sequence contained in the present day often cited IT Archive folder 1152A S. M. Army Historical Office, which collects part of the mass of microfilmed Italian military documents after the war by the Americans and then returned to our archives.

-at 11:15: Monti announced that nine Macchi 202 had to take off for Pantelleria "unescorted", adding in this respect: "Your Excellency, the Macchi 202 can start: nine; But there is the cloudless sky just to the mid channel. They should go unescorted; That is, they will not return."

(32) Ibid, 4/134 sheet, prot. 4028.

(33) Ibid, 4/69 sheet. phonogram of Pantelleria Command No. 0528 of 12.10 pm on 11 June 1943.

Santoro: "We must do something. See to give a little escort. The Germans do not go?".

Monti: "I'm already gone, and waiting to start again if it is necessary. I am so angry about what has happened that the liaison officer reports that can not even talk to them."

Santoro: "What are they angry?".

Monti: "What the yield is too hasty and, therefore, I do not know what the reaction."

Santoro: "Try to send these Macchi with a little spare, so as not to say that we did nothing" ⁽³⁴⁾.

-at 11:30: Monti: "Here's a telegram saying that the ships are getting closer shooting and probably do not see the (yield signs), which means that the signals have been raised. Then he says that the Colonel (Col. Raverdino, note) has provided for the destruction of money, but the commander of the base did not disclose anything. "

Santoro: "He's a nice guy this commander of the base!"

Monti: "And a strange one, because right now that the force had to be used on the island ... there among the rocks and the mountains" ⁽³⁵⁾.

-at 11:34: Monti: "The boy (he was the Sub. Leut. D'Amico, head of the Air radio link in Pantelleria, note) announces:" Now the fleet is approaching, it is the end. They are blasting all the fortifications. *But as long as we gave up?* "(Emphasis in the original, note)

Santoro: "Thus says?"

Monti: "Yes."

Santoro: "Transmit all these communications, all the way to the Supreme Command."

Monti: "The radio station has ceased traffic at 11:15 hours."

Santoro: "That the Lieutenant?".

Monti: "No, D'Amico tells me to keep in line."

Santoro: "From Raverdino any news?"

Monti: "No" they must be cut off. "

Santoro: "What a pity!"

(34) A.U.S.E., IT folder 1.152A cited, 4/139 sheet, prot. 4048. It is in this respect at least surprising to learn that aircraft M.C.202 fighter needed the protection of other fighters.

(35) *Ibid*, 4/137 sheet, prot. 4050. The suspenseful dots indicate an interruption in telephone communication.

Monti: "Your Excellency, if I had been there even us!"

Santoro: "What a pity!" ⁽³⁶⁾.

In controversy he is also inserted a phone call from the O.B.S between three German officers., To which we refer the documented report,

- 11.45 hours: Lt. Col. Adler: "The question of the white flag is true?".

Capt. Farm: "Unfortunately, I have confirmation from our there: Italians have raised the white flag: also my people, in addition to telling communicated by phone, I also sent by wire. It seems, finally, that our airmen have the clear view "

Lt. Col. Adler: "In that case it is a piece of crap!"

Capt. Farm: "I passed the IC officer" (Information Office, note).

Lt. Col. Adler: "It is safe because the white flag?"

IC Official "51".

Lt. Col. Adler: "The artillery fire from the coast?"

(37) Official IC: "No, I have raised the white flag. The English, instead, continue to fire"

At 12:22 Col. Raverdino managed to get back in communication from Pantelleria with Gen. Monti in Catania by sending this disturbing message ⁽³⁸⁾:

"Had orders of Admiral (Pavesi) not to blow hangars, Give me answer after which I'll blow station."

With the immediate response of Gen. Monti at 12:24, on his own initiative, then he issued the following unambiguous order ⁽³⁹⁾:

"C. A .S. Radio bridge to Pantelleria for Col Raverdino, Duce order provide for hangar destruction not just as the enemy start landing. For radio stations wait for the last moment. "

The problem of the destruction of the hangar - which should have been an established as fact, but instead are still unresolved demonstrated when the British landed on the island since surrender at

(36) *Ibid*, 4/132 sheet, prot. 4051.

(37) *Ibid* 4/140 sheet, prot. 4052.

(38) *Ibid*, 4/71 sheet.

(39) *Ibid*, 4/71 sheet.

11:00 - then became a just as frantic concern of the Air Force Command of Catania, so that on the same subject it exchanged three more phone calls with the Pantelleria Radio bridge (Sub. Lt. D'Amico) in the space of three minutes.

13:00 In fact Gen. Monti recommended to Sub. Lt. D'Amico to convey by any means to Col. Raverdino the above order of the day at 12:24 destruction of the hangar. At 13:02 D'Amico said, "the note of the hangar destruction is communicated to command, but as soon as finished the communication lines are down." Finally at 13:03 the same Pantelleria Radio bridge manager pointed disconsolately: "I have no communications with the airport. I have no information about destruction of the hangar" ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

The same hot and then unresolved need not to fall intact into enemy hands the modern hangar in cave of the island of Pantelleria was simultaneously debated by the General Monti and Santoro in their telephone conversations of midday. In fact, at 12:25 it took place in this regard The following meaningful dialogue between the two senior officers of the Royal Air Force ⁽⁴¹⁾.

Monti: "At the moment I get from Raverdino" Had the Admiral not ordered to blow hangar." I said, "Duce Ordered burn the hangar." If I did wrong tell me, as long as I have time to talk. "

Santoro: "I do not understand because they do not have to blow up the hangar."

Monti: "Eh! Excellence, many things you understand ... And a whole program! Not by us, of course. So I replied as I told you. "

Santoro: "In any case the yield is safe?"

Monti. "He sent the telegram to the Admiral."

Santoro: "Did the telegram go?"

Monri; "Yup",

Santoro: "I do not understand as long as they do not want to blow up the hangar."

Monti: "Oh, Excellency! Provided that the remains ... There is no other explanation. "

Santoro: "I fail to grasp the true idea."

Monti: "And a very strange order."

(40) All in A.U.S.E., IT 1152A folder mentioned, sheet 4/72.

(41) Ibid, 4/135 sheet, prot. 4055.

Finally, five minutes later, at 12:30, Gen. Monti struggled by phone with the same subject with Col. Casero of Superaereo, trying to achieve by other means the approval to his actions that Santoro had eluded. Here is the call recording ⁽⁴²⁾.

Monti: "Are you aware of all of the Pantelleria tragedy? "

Casero: "Yes."

Monti: "At this time Col. Raverdino telegraphed saying: " I have orders of the admiral not to blow the hangar "- I lack permission to reply:" On the order of the Duce proceed with hangars destruction as soon landing start ". I would like to have confirmation of my order ".

Casero: "You did it on your own?".

Monti: "Yes, because it is inconceivable that made done you want to leave the hangar in enemy hands. However I would like to know if it's okay. I want an immediate confirmation from the Supreme Command. "

Casero: "All right, Mr. General."

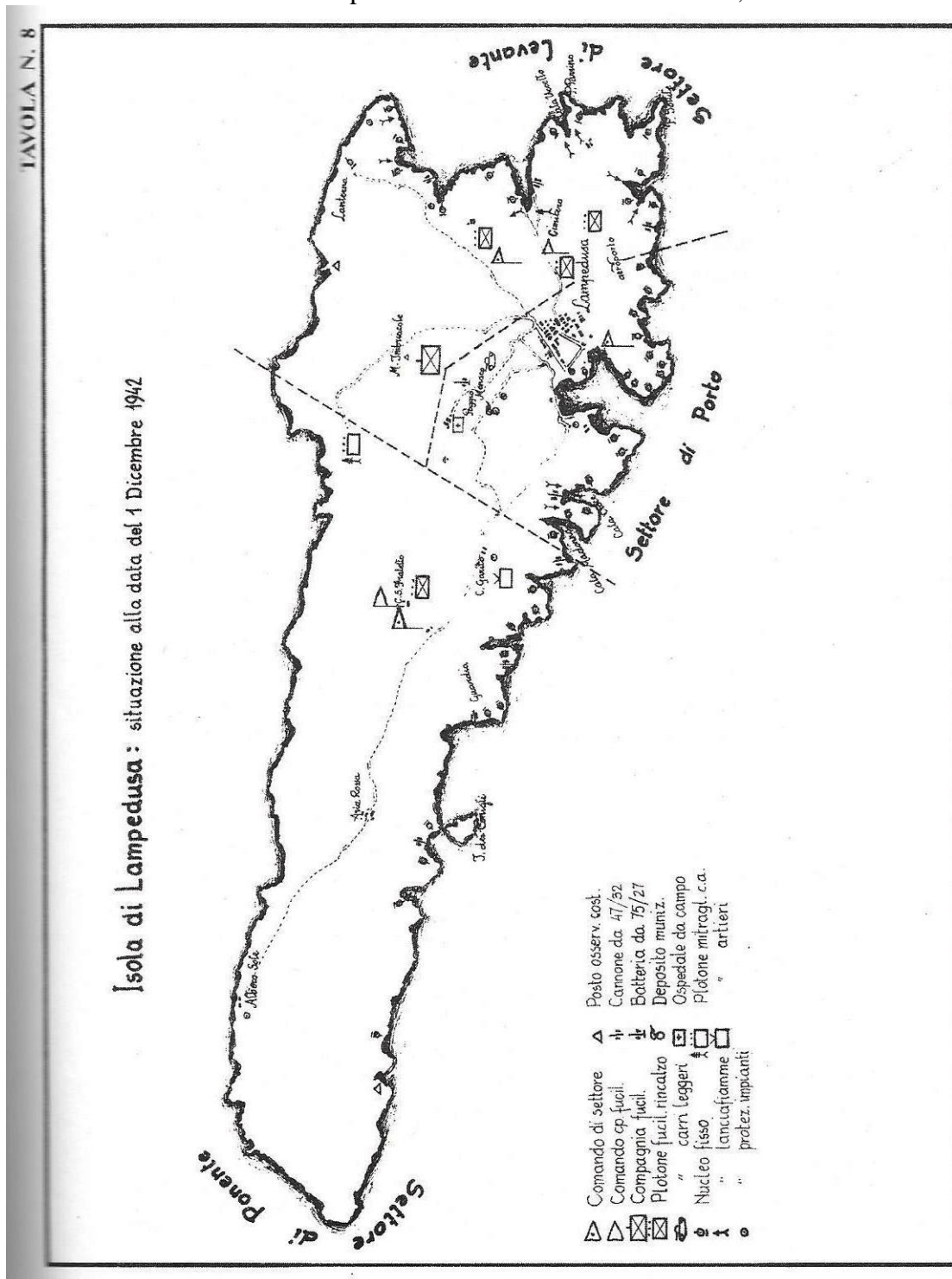
In that climate of suspicion and doubt it was clearly evident and very reasonable desire of Gen. Monti to receive the consent for his laudable initiative, which he had asked in vain to Gen. Santoro five minutes before. It was not however possible to trace any dispatch of approval by the Supreme Command.

3. THE FALL OF LAMPEDUSA AND LINOSA (See Map no. 8)

The island of Lampedusa in the conflict represented another advanced base in central and southern Mediterranean, and although belonging to the archipelago of Pelagie with Linosa and Lampione, was only system with Pantelleria. Its military importance emerged mainly from its geographical location: 205 km from the Sicilian coast, about 150 kilometers from the Tunisian and Pantelleria and to almost 160 kilometers from Malta.

The limited area of Lampedusa (20 square kilometers, the maximum length of 11 kilometers and 133 meters maximum height above sea level) and his own position had not suggested

(42) *Ibid* 4/138 sheet, prot. 4056.



a military build-up equal to that of Pantelleria. The island had been placed in a defensive condition that would have been relatively strong if they existed in the Mediterranean for a better balance of forces and wider Italian logistic possibilities ⁽⁴³⁾.

Lampedusa was also under a Navy Command, directed by Capt. Bernardini, dependent on the Maritime Base Command of Pantelleria. Under the command of Capt. Bernardini acting Commander of the Army troops, led by Lt. Col. Paleologus and having available fixed and mobile defenses for a total of 4,400 men.

The mobile defense forces were represented by six machine-gun companies, three autonomous rifle companies of the "*Lupi di Toscana*", a flamethrower company, and by a platoon of four Lt tanks, three platoons of two mortars and antitank platoons.

The fixed defenses were made by artillery, which included a group of nine Milmart batteries, a Army 75/27 battery three D.I.C.A.T. batteries used for the defense of the only airport on the island, but also with anti-ship and anti-landing tasks complement of four anti-aircraft sections.

A special services company from the 5th Regiment "*Aosta*", Four companies and workers of the engineers, a special platoon of sappers engineers, a field hospital, a special motorized section and various depots, which ensured self-sufficiency average of a month, completed the island's military apparatus, for which information is provided in the appendix (appendix n. 10).

Even Lampedusa was kept under constant air pressure, although not comparable to that suffered from Pantelleria, and the night of June 7 the British test the defensive reactivity of the island with some *Commandos*, backed by four lookouts. The attempt to infiltrate the island by these British Special Corps failed and the raiders were repulsed.

On 11 June, the day decisive for Pantelleria, a violent bombing enemy, followed at short intervals by the fire of British naval ships, developed against the port of Lampedusa,

(43) An interesting reminder signed J. A. OGLETHORPE on Lampedusa conditions before and after the British occupation is kept in P.R.O. WO bottom 204, 2278 folder: *Military Headquarters Papers. Allied Force Headquarters. Lampedusa: civil administration by Allied Military Government.*

causing serious damage and the loss of two Italian torpedo boats parked there (Mas 539 and 564). Also on the 11th the allies, by means of leaflets, they invited the garrison to surrender, for the moment not accepted by the Island Command.

The enemy naval air pressure became even more massive on 12 June, as the Capt. Bernardini reported to Supermarina with the following two consecutive phonograms of the same morning ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

-at 11:00: "British naval ships continue to cross around the island bombing".

-at 11:30: "We are constantly bombarded with high-caliber bombs. I still do not respond to the summons of surrender. Long live Italy".

For its part Supermarina at 13:25 so reported to the Supreme Commander ⁽⁴⁵⁾:

"Marina Messina communicates Marina Lampedusa following message:

"They fly over a thousand aircraft hammering the island uninterruptedly since this morning with bombs very big caliber. Most destroyed defense. Artillery destroyed. Huge losses and uncontrolled. I think not being able to hold the next landing. I ask urgent orders. Bombing continues. Bernardini".

At 13:50 the Supermarina himself answered this call of the Cap. Bernardini, expressing confidence in the island's resistance to what had remained any possibility of damaging the enemy ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

However, early in the afternoon of June 12, 1943 on. Island Command met to decide on the continuation of the fight or surrender, to which the British had renewed the invitations. In this regard the report of the Major Assenza, commander of the defense works of Lampedusa states that "considering that lacked the means to combat ships that were held outside shooting and against the overpowering air force, we unanimously decided to surrender" ⁽⁴⁷⁾. It was then immediately prepared the following phonogram, which arrived at the Supermarina at 15:50 and was then relayed to the Supreme Command ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

(44) A.U.S.E., IT 1151A folder: Lampedusa, sheet 3/4 of 12 June 1943.

(45) *Ibid*, sheet 3/4 cit.

(46) *Ibid*, sheet 3/4 cit.

(47) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, the file 4.

(48) A.U.S.E., IT 1151A folder, sheet 3/3.

"Impossible to cause further offense at enemy. Enemy aerial & naval action have totally crushed all our defense. Troops asking rendered praise to the fortunes of the Fatherland. We have done our duty. Viva Italy. Bernardini".

At 16:25 on June 12 of that he broke off the radio bridge between Lampedusa and Port Empedocle, which began to operate for only twenty minutes between 18:20 and 18:40⁽⁴⁹⁾. The latter was now intercepted the following Lampedusa signal for the Marina Messina⁽⁵⁰⁾.

"Please pertain to Malta for termination air and naval bombardment, having already made regulatory signals to surrender the Base."

A Supermarina came then also the news that "a German station r.t. had communicated to Taormina at 18:35 a British warship had entered the port of Lampedusa and the surrender was sent by radio"⁽⁵¹⁾.

In truth, once sent the yield signs, the Lampedusa Command could get verbally to terms with an isolated British pilot, Sgt. Cohen, who was forced to splashdown by luck in the waters, and that was how the first occupant of the Fortified town⁽⁵²⁾.

Only during the night British a company of the 2nd *Coldstream Guards* Regt. began to disembark, followed by other contingents in the morning of the 13th also they carried out a bloodless occupation of Linosa, then manned by three coastal platoons and a anti-paratrooper unit⁽⁵³⁾.

The island of Lampione, with no garrison fell on the same day in the hands of the British.

During the investment of Lampedusa did not occur Italian naval operations, already absent the rest at the most important loss of Pantelleria. One squadron of R.

(49) *Ibid*, 3/7 sheet.

(50) *Ibid*, 3/2 sheet and 1444 folder: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command., Day June 12, 1943, p. 3.

(51) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: "historical diary of the Supreme Command", the day June 12, 1943, p. 3 and EN folder 1151A, 3/2 sheet.

(52) D. RICHARDS -H.G. SAUNDERS: *Royal Air Force 1939-1945*, vol. II cit.) Italian translation by the S.M.E., pp. 462-463.

(53) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, the file 4.

Air Force came to bomb on June 12 British ships in the harbor, when the island of Lampedusa had already capitulated ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

4. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE SURRENDER OF PANTELLERIA AND LAMPEDUSA

The British landing on Pantelleria began starting at noon on 11 June 1943, ie one hour after the fortified island surrender, whose signals were received by the British but with some delay ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

Immediately after the capitulation it was estimated that of the total of 11,657 men of Pantelleria Italian garrison had been killed 60 and wounded 150, while four civilian died and were 6 wounded of a total of about 12,000 residents ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

According to the records of the investigation entrusted to Admiral Angelo Iachino later, however, the dead turned out to be only 36 between the military and 5 civilian, while the wounded were 103 soldiers and 6 civilians ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Finally, according to the Army General Staff, would have resulted in Pantelleria 39 dead and 141 wounded among military personnel and 4 dead and 6 wounded among the civilian population ⁽⁵⁸⁾. However, all the survivors of the Italian garrison were taken prisoner along with 78 German located at the radar station.

The Adm. Iachino investigation also made certain that only a minimum part of the Pantelleria defensive were affected at the time of the enemy landing ⁽⁵⁹⁾.

For his part the official report of the R.A.F. He states that the island's defenders did not carry out any demolition work "although they had been made abundant preparations in this regard."

Also according to this report, "thus I fell into the hands of Allies large quantities of materials of all kinds" ⁽⁶⁰⁾.

(54) *Ibid.*

(55) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit. p. 72.

(56) A.U.S.E., IT 1152A folder, 4/124 sheet of June 12, 1943.

(57) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, file 4: "Excerpt from the report of Admiral Angelo Iachino, p. 1 7.

(58) *Ibid*, p. 17.

(59) S. ATTANASIO: *Sicily without Italy*, July-August, 1943, op. cit., p. 60.

(60) D. RICHARDS -H.G. SAUNDERS: *Royal Air Force 1939-1945*, vol. II cited. Italian translation by the S.M.E., p. 462

No loss was lamented by British troops, landed the rest of Pantelleria after the termination of the resistance, while in the official report of Gen. Alexander Allied air losses were described as 'negligible' and the Pantelleria airport acquisition "very viable for Sicilian campaign" ⁽⁶¹⁾.

It is also certain that no Anglo-American ship present that day was sunk in the operations for the conquest Pantelleria, despite the Axis press had spoken of a troopship from 8,000 t.s.l. and thirteen landing craft LCT sunk, as well as a cruiser probably destroyed ⁽⁶²⁾.

The fall of Pantelleria and Lampedusa had consequences that went beyond those strictly military and that were resolved in a painful impact on the morale of the defenders of Sicily and, in general, the entire Italian people.

Gen. Ambrosio quickly realized this situation on June 18 sent a letter to the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the three Armed Forces, the object "moral preparation of the combatants." Given its laudable aim galvanizing, we should reprint the contents ⁽⁶³⁾.

"1. The recent unfortunate events which forced the islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa to surrender, can give rise to the belief in the soul of the troops that is enough some days of aerial bombardment, albeit intense, to sap the strength of preparing in the defense areas.

Against this unjustified feeling of course necessary to react with the greatest energy, carrying out effective and passionate moral propaganda, provided that all the officers and soldiers, know that the homeland must be defended to the death.

2. But the spiritual preparation must also invest a larger field, reactivating in all, and especially commanders, the offensive spirit that went diminishing.

For the Army, the current overall situation, this offensive spirit must be stimulated with the moral and professional preparation "bold" in the fullest sense of the word.

For the Air Force and the Navy are possible actions, albeit limited in scope, giving the enemy the tangible evidence of our "biting".

And above all, it is alive in all, commanders and soldiers, the intimate conviction of Final Victory!"

(61) SUPPLEMENT TO THE "LONDON GAZETTE" of February 10, 1948: *La conquista della Sicilia dal 10 luglio al 17 agosto*, official report of Gen. H. R. ALEXANDER. Allied aerial losses were 15 aircraft.

(62) A.U.S.E., she Folder 1444 "The historical diary of the Supreme Command", the day June 11, 1943.

(63) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, the file 4.

For his part, Gen. Roatta, recent new Chief of the G.S. of the Army, he issued on June 23 to all Army Commands, the Army Corps and the Command of Army Group South Circular 19900, concerning "attacking offensive deductions of Pantelleria" ⁽⁶⁴⁾.

In this document Roatta stressed particularly the "moral implications" aerial offense of Pantelleria, calling them very serious especially on the population. From this emerged the problem of the evacuation of civilians from the areas of operations, which according to the Chief of the G.S. of the Army would have to be addressed immediately, but that -as we have said was not in fact never solved and completed in Sicily. Also it remained unresolved the other issue, which is also raised in the circular Roatta on vigilance against obstructions on rail vehicles by the population exodus.

In the operative field Gen. Roatta instead showed in his circular to realize even then that the bombing of Pantelleria, as relentless and massive, did not have "the effects of a destroyer of men, weapons and defensive What to do pretty much higher than those caused by concentrated artillery preparations, which have occurred in the past war and large most recent battles."

The fall of Pantelleria, and the first details of his surrender were not lacking of course also worry about Gen. Guzzoni, recently commander of the armed forces Sicily, which in this regard addressed to the subordinate commands already mentioned secret memo n. 18 / S of 27 June 1943, which "must not be reproduced or made known in its veracity " (See Appendix no. 6 in the Appendixes) ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

Guzzoni, while declaring themselves skeptical of the Anglo-American press reports that "the defense of the island had not been determined and the Italian garrison had no defense," he claimed to want to take a cue from such uncontrolled hostile statements to invoke to the subordinate commands on the following points.

-The Trust in the behavior of our troops, new to combat, "was not to be blind, but very alert."

(64) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, file 4: the S.M.R.E. Circular n. 19900 of June 23, 1943.

(65) *Ibid*, Annex 1/4: Secret Memo of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 18 / S of 27 June 1943.

Show confidence was necessary, but if it was not enough "compelling moral action", it was necessary to "act with extreme severity, including through the use of arms."

-The Danger that the Sicilian troops linger to fire "so as not to hit the enemy even with the population" could also be accompanied by their "desire to abandon the fight or even to move to the enemy camp, with the hope of to more effectively protect their loved ones and their own interests" ⁽⁶⁶⁾.

- Considering that the enemy could rely on that situation, Guzzoni concluded by warning of "silencing any feelings of fraternity, tell facing the supreme interests of the homeland, would constitute a betrayal" and that "where there is the enemy to hit there you shoot, although this can be dangerous and cause harm to civilians."

One of the first rigorous Anglo-American comments on the fall of Pantelleria, to whom Guzzoni mentioned, was that of the US naval expert Harris, broadcast in German from the radio station in Cincinnati at 19:30 on 11 June 1943, the day of the surrender of the island ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

That press release announcing the conquest of Pantelleria after just a month of attacks and bombings of the allied Air and Navy, "and proudly placed emphasis on the comparison between the resistance from the island and the Italian offer from Malta to air raids of the axis lasted two years, also considering different possibilities to supply the two strongholds. It was also pointed out the failure of the Italian fleet and the poor opposition of the Axis air forces, what had prompted the commentator to speak of obvious "different spirit behind the two opposing forces."

Indeed, even the comments of the top leaders of the Axis on the fall of Pantelleria were very critical. For example Gen. Kesselring said in his memoirs that the yield of this island, like that of Lampedusa, was "a very sad chapter in the functioning of the Italian Commands at the time" ⁽⁶⁸⁾.

(66) These warnings Guzzoni, which to some may appear even prophetic in light of certain subsequent events, appear instead quite serious at that time, the lack of episodes that justify them.

(67) A.U.S.E., IT 1152A folder, 4/115 sheet: Radio Newsletter n. 163.

(68) A. KESSELRING: *Memorie di guerra*, op. cit., p. 170

According to Bottai even Mussolini refrained from harshly criticizing the incident on the occasion of the famous and fateful meeting of the Grand Council of 24 July 1943. The leader was attributed on that occasion the merit of having wanted the creation of the Fortified town, that was declared then impregnable by his own military leaders. Without making any mention of the issue of the alleged lack of water on the island, Mussolini then remembered that Admiral Pavesi telegraphed declaring impossible any further resistance, and that he then gave the order to surrender. The latter, as we know, still came to Pantelleria after the admiral had decided themselves to put an end to all resistance. The conclusion was that the Fortified town fell with "thirty-eight dead and eleven thousand prisoners and could have been the Stalingrad of the Mediterranean" ⁽⁶⁹⁾.

Also surprised by the easy conquest of Pantelleria and Lampedusa were the highest Anglo-American representatives. Churchill, for example, had to be expressed in the following way ⁽⁷⁰⁾:

"The previously evening did a lot of talk of the entity and the dangers of this enterprise. Which was crowned with complete success, with no losses on our part, with the exception, according to the sailors, a soldier wounded by the bite of an ass. More than 11,000 prisoners fell in to our hands. In the following two days also neighboring islands of Lampedusa and Linosa capitulated, the first to the pilot of a plane forced to land due to lack of fuel. "

A codicil to the impressions of the British prime minister offered to us by Eisenhower, who confesses in his memoirs as well ⁽⁷¹⁾:

"We had between us (between Eisenhower and Churchill, note) a small bet based on its assessment that there were not more than 3,000 on Italian Pantelleria. He offered to pay five cents a pound for every man captive by us to do more than that amount. It took 11,000 and though, of course, I had forgotten that playful bet, paid immediately by calculating the change himself and declaring that that figure would buy all the prisoners that we could want" ⁽⁷²⁾.

(69) G. BOTTAI: *Vent'anni e un giorno*, Milano 1949, p. 298.

(70) W. Churchill: *La seconda guerra mondiale*, op. cit., vol. IX: *La campagna d'Italia*, p. 43.

(71) D.D.EISENHOWER: *Crociato in Europa*, op. cit., p. 216.

(72) The official report of Gen. Eisenhower on the fall of Pantelleria is conserved in P.R.O "fund PREM 3, 228/4 folder. *Exploitation of " Husky"operation: Gen. Eisenhower; report on Pantelleria operations.*

Admiral Cunningham also, commander of the allied fleets in the Mediterranean, has bequeathed to us the same feelings, referring to the impression that during the bombing of Pantelleria from the sea made on June 8 the British could conquer the island if they had then been provided with "a few hundred soldiers with landing craft" ⁽⁷³⁾. The British admiral then went on saying:

"General Eisenhower and I were very encouraged and indeed the island fell into our hands on June 11, raising white flags while our troops heading towards the coast in their landing craft. I need not describe the episode, since, at the time it was given wide publicity, but I must say that the reason given for it - and made that the lack of water is -not exact. The truth is that Italians, affected by their defeat in Tunisia, did not have the confidence to face another battle" ⁽⁷⁴⁾.

The last severe assessment in order of time is that of the historian Jackson, who in his work on the Italian campaign so he expressed ⁽⁷⁵⁾:

"The allied air forces were naturally enthusiastic about the amazing efficiency evidence provided from the air arm. The denial would only come with the battles of Cassino and Caen, which would show what might happen if the island had been manned by German instead of Italian. "

5. THE INTENSIFIED ALLIED AERIAL-NAVAL PRESSURE ON SICILY AND APPROACH OF THE INVASION FORCES

The conquest of Tunisia by the Anglo-Americans, combined with that of Algeria and Morocco, not only allowed them to take possession of the important bases in North Africa, where ships and planes to amass successive leaps forward, but opened the way Allied traffic through the central Mediterranean, allowing to control at least one of the two shores of the Strait of Sicily,

(73) A.B. CUNNINGHAM: *L'odissea di un marinaio*, op. cit. p. 407

(74) *Ibid*, p. 407.

(75) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. cit., p. 47,

In addition, to enable the best possible experience in the stretch of sea that long contended, the Royal Navy began a vast own dredging operation to coincide with the conquest of Tunis. In Days, 13 and 14 May 1943, the British minesweeper, from Malta, intensely devoted to this work and on May 15 they opened a passage along two hundred miles wide and two of the Channel of Galite and Susa and from there to Tripoli.

This security corridor ran through a first convoy of four merchant ships escorted by the fast anti-aircraft cruiser *Carisile* and four destroyers, who arrived happily in Tripoli on May 22 and then to Alexandria four days later.

This was the first supply shipment to pass completely through the Mediterranean from far away in May 1941 and it was followed immediately after a regular series of convoys between Gibraltar and Alexandria called "GTH" and "TXG". The advantage for the Allies was remarkable, as the Mediterranean route, more easily passable now, meant a great saving of cargo and war ships, before then mostly forced into long voyage around Africa and who now could therefore be used more economically and distributed more rationally.

Meanwhile they flowed in all ports North Africans the means and supplies needed for the execution of the planned invasion of Sicily. Among the first to arrive were the new landing craft LST, LCT and LCI, which were under construction in the United States since the previous summer and were initiated through the Atlantic just now.

The overcrowding of such vessels in the ports of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia could not remain hidden from the Axis reconnaissance of course and after the bombers of the German 2nd *Luftflotte* tried a number of sorties, with results which, however, as we have already mentioned, were quite unsatisfactory ⁽⁷⁶⁾.

The Allied naval preparations for HUSKY operation therefore knew no rest and even in early June began to arrive in the Mediterranean the first huge Anglo-Americans convoys, until that moment exclusive prerogative of the

(76) See Chapter IV, paragraph 1. Please note that the only German Fliegerkorps II took against the well 772 bombers North Africa French ports during 24 raids.

Atlantic traffic. For example, June 2, 1943 he entered the Mediterranean, a convoy of a good 129 merchant ships, which covered an area of sixty-eight square miles. It, after having posted to various ports in North Africa most of the steamers, reached Tripoli unscathed on the 8th.

Most contrasted was navigating another massive Allied convoy of 41 merchant direct from Gibraltar to Tripoli, that on June 27 was attacked off Cape Bon by aircraft of the II *Fliegerkorps*, but mentions no major damage while shooting down seven German aircraft.

More successes obtained by the eighteen German submarines in the Mediterranean at that time, later reduced to seventeen for the loss of the *U-97* on June 16, 1943. In fact, they, in a series of attacks carried out from 18 May to late June in the western basin, they sunk four enemy cargo ships from and damaged as many ⁽⁷⁷⁾.

Even the Italian-German mines, despite the mentioned painstaking Allied dredging work, then made some victim and is particularly effective. They showed the barriers placed by German torpedo boats of the 3rd flotilla. The latter is made in fact responsible for the loss in the Sicilian Channel, between the fall of Tunisia and the end of June, a minesweeper, a motor launch, landing craft and a rescue ship. Of mines laid by the Italian Navy instead exploded on June 26 a English motor gun boat off Pantelleria.

In addition to intensify their maritime traffic in the center-western Mediterranean, they provided the allies to increase their aerial presence locally and immediately after the conclusion of the Tunisian campaign, the Anglo-American air force began to increase its pressure on the Italian territory. They were particularly targeted ports, airfields, railway junctions and industrial installations and in June, after the fall of Pantelleria, the Allied air offensive turned more insistently against the traffic in the Strait of Messina. In particular this unfortunate city was bombed eleven times between June 12 and July 2, while devastating turned out the air raid of 17 June on the airport of Comiso, where were destroyed a good 25 German aircraft.

(77) For details see. A. A. Santoni -F. Mattesini; *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945* op. cit .. pp. 386- 387.

This intensified Anglo-American air pressure, however, he was exerted simultaneously on Sardinia and on the bases of the peninsula, so as to leave the Axis commands in uncertainty about future Allied intentions, uncertainty -as we saw -hard almost to the eve of the landing.

A clear exposition of the tactic then followed by Anglo-American aviation was provided to us by the General Santoro in the following words ⁽⁷⁸⁾.

"Sometimes the attacks were carried out on all airfields of a sector with the exception of one or two and, when the Franco-German units were transferred to the latter their own aircraft, they were attacked with mass action. Low-flying attacks of fighters and fighter - bombers were then performed, with excellent results, on decentralization slopes on which they were trying to increase the dispersion of the fighter aircraft.

The work of the bombers was facilitated by the work of photographic reconnaissance, which periodically, within a maximum period of four hours, photographing all airports, in order to have an accurate idea of the Italian-German air placement at any given time.

On the eve of D-Day, the Allied air force had excellently paved the way for the operation Husky. "

With the approach of the date of the landing from the North African ports and the Middle East, - congested of Allied ships, they began to empty and the imposing ships of the invasion fleet, grouped into twenty-two attack convoys, began the navigation to the starting zone established in southern Sicily. Carrier vessels and landing craft were not nearly molested in their approach. In fact he recorded in those days a total absence of air contrast, while only five German submarines attacked with some success on three of the twenty-two enemy convoys.

The First attack convoy to be intercepted by a U -boat was "KMS. 18/B" coming from Great Britain with the troops of the Canadian 1st Division, which was targeted between 4 and 5 July by the three German submarines *U-375*, *U-409* and *U-593*, losing as many British steamers. Of these, *St. Essylt* and the *City of*

(78) G. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II cited. p. 539. As we have repeatedly said, the allies rallied for HUSKY operation, under the command of the English Air Marshal Tedder, 3,462 combat aircraft, of which 2,510 operational. HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*. vol. V cit .. p.46.

Venice, carrying five hundred vehicles, was torpedoed shortly before midnight to the east of Cape Tencs by *U-375*, while the *Devis* suffered the same fate in the afternoon of the 5th at Dellys by the *U-593*.

Another a British ship, the *Shahjeham*, who was part of the convoy MWS.36. from the Middle East, it was torpedoed on July 6 at Derna by the *U-453* and sank with men and equipment of the 231st Infantry Brigade.

In the following days other unsuccessful attacks were carried out along the Algerian coast by two other German submarines (*U-431* and *U-616*), while the morning of the 10th hit the target widen of Bougie the *U-371*, which damaged the Liberty ship *Mutthew Maury* and the oil tanker *Gulf Prince* belonging to a US invasion convoy ⁽⁷⁹⁾.

The successes of the U-boats, albeit modest considering the amount of traffic the enemy, they were made possible thanks to their cruises along the mandatory allied routes. Conversely any results obtained Italian submarines, eight of which were held in patrol area immediately to the south of Sardinia, at a disadvantage in order to counteract the movement of the invading enemy forces, who followed routes close to the African coast ⁽⁸⁰⁾.

Since the night of 8 July, the weather began to turn for the worse. And there was a strong wind and on the 9th the sea swelled to the point that the violence of the waves soon made navigation difficult and led the Allied Command to consider the possibility of delaying the operation. Eventually Eisenhower decided to continue the route, so that the assault convoys, which met in the afternoon of July 9 southeast of Malta in the configurations listed in the previous chapter, moved towards the chosen landing beaches, led the last stretch with appropriate bright signs by British submarines. As we have seen, the bad sea conditions made the Axis commands to feel very unlikely immediate enemy invasion,

(79) The type ships "Liberty" were medium tonnage merchant ship (around 7,000 t.s.l.) constructed in large series in the American and British sites with extensive use of prefabricated parts.

(80) It is recalled that on the night between 3 and 4 July a British Commando tried to carry out a survey on the beaches of Avola, but it was rejected by a 374 ° Battalion company. Coastal and by the battery fire.

which ended up granting the Allies another unexpected advantage ⁽⁸¹⁾.

At 16:30 on 9 July, however, a Bf. 109 scout, of II *Fliegerkorps* sighted north of Malta five groups of ships, including 150 - 180 landing craft and patrol ships, headed for the southern beaches of Sicily.

At 19:30, came confirmation of this observation by the O.B.S Commander in Frascati, Supermarina ordered the release of the German torpedo boats of the 3rd flotilla and held in the Italian port present in Trapani because, as these are of lesser tonnage, it was thought that they could not sail due to bad sea conditions.

Sailing from Porto Empedocle to Augusta, the torpedo boats *S-30*, *S-33*, *S-36*, *S-54*, *S-55*, *S-58* and *S-61* sighted at Licata enemy ships, but due to the conditions, the weather of the German vessels could not engage in a torpedo attack. The flotilla therefore reversed course, heading to pass to the west of Sicily, where the force of the waves, which caused damage to the hulls of *S-33* and *S-61*, at Licata sighted enemy ships, but due to the weather conditions, the German vessels could not engage in a torpedo attack.

In the evening of July 9, I arrived at Rome other warning signs about upcoming enemy intentions. Among other things they were made new sightings of convoys towards Sicily at 18:10, at 19:20 and at 19:35 ⁽⁸²⁾. Also known that the Tactical Command of the II *Fliegerkorps* at Taormina had been destroyed by bombing since 12:30; resulting in loss of communications, and that allied aircraft had caused damage to other Sicilian airports.

Despite all these last-minute information, the Supreme Command issued at 19:40 that July 9, the already mentioned appreciation n. 41811/Op of the "Committee on maritime reconnaissance", which concluded by stating that "despite the scarcity of elements of judgment it is believed that the beginning of operations is imminent especially in dependence on weather conditions" ⁽⁸³⁾.

(81) It also happened that at the eve of the operation Overlord on D-Day, Gen. Eisenhower were to take the same tough decision to land despite bad weather conditions, which in turn again distracted the defenders.

(82) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", on July 9, 1943, and cinnamon, 1501, attached. 398.

(83) A.U.S.E., 1501 folder, attachment 427 already mentioned in Chapter III, paragraph 1.

However, starting from 20:30 multiplied sightings of enemy convoys directed to the southern coast of Sicily, against whom they were finally directed massive although unsuccessful airstrikes⁽⁸⁴⁾. The latter attended at 22:40 even four Sm.79 torpedo bombers of Sardinia, followed two hours later by thirteen bombers Cant Z.1007 bis took off from Perugia and resupplied in Decimomannu.

For their part, the Germans, after a night similar failures, arrive on the American ships off of Gela and Scoglitti ninety Ju. 88 at dawn on July 10. And it was these Germanic bombers to achieve the unique achievements in the first reaction step, by blowing up the destroyer *Maddox*: sinking the minesweeper *Sentinel*.

Meanwhile the undeniable presence of several enemy convoys in areas south of Sicily, in a moment also already the first British paratroopers were landing, had caused on 23:10 of July 9, the Supreme Command issued known communiqué n. 1586/IRP This set out "clear" the beginning of an attempted enemy landing on this island, although it added that it was stubbornly not yet ruled out, "a similar action to Sardinia" ⁽⁸⁵⁾.

For its part the Command of the Armed Forces Sicily had already ordered from 19:30 the then converted alarm was in a "state emergency day" at 01:10 on 10 July, after receiving the first news of paratroop landings ⁽⁸⁶⁾. Finally, within twenty minutes, both the Supreme Command (01:30 hours) and the Command of Guzzoni (01:50 hours) enacted provisions on without use of the ports are considered endangered. Gen. Ambrosio recommended, in fact, generally to the timeliness of the three of Staffs of this transaction on the threatened islands, while Gen. Guzzoni certainly ordered the blasting of interruptions arranged in Porto Empedocle and Licata (87).

(84) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: "Historic Diary. Supreme Command ", on July 9, 1943, and 1501 folder, attachment 398: sightings of 20:30, 22:10, 23:40 and 24.00 on 9 July and sightings of the hours 00:40, 01:05, 20.02, .02.35, 25.04, 05.22, 05:25, 06:00, 06:45, 07:25, 07:30, 07.55, 08:16, 08:23 and 08:25 of the July 10, 1943, many of these recent sightings were made after the execution of the Anglo-landing American.

(85) A.U.S.E., folder 1501, annex 414 already mentioned in chapter III paragraph 1,

(86) A.U.S.E., 2124 / B folder, file 2124 / A: "Report of the Armed Forces Command. Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943 ..

(87) A.U.S.E., folder 1501, attachment 469 and 2124 / B folder. file 2124 / A cit.

Hitler finally made on 9 July an important decision, ordering that part of the German 1st Parachute Division was immediately transferred from France to Sicily⁽⁸⁸⁾. As we shall see, in fact, the 3rd and 4th Regt. This unit arrived on the island on July 12.

(88) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, Op. cit., p. 111

CHAPTER VI

LANDINGS IN SICILY AND THE FIRST REACTIONS

1. THE INVASION FROM HEAVENS (See Map no. 9)

As envisaged by the plan ally, first Anglo-American units to be used in the invasion of Sicily were the paratroopers.

At 18:42 of the July 9, 1943 took off from various fields in North Africa 144 transport aircraft (109 C-47 Americans and 35 "Abermale" English) many of which towed "Waco" and "Horsa" gliders, carrying 1,600 men of the English 1st Airborne Brigade of Gen. Hicks. Immediately after, however, because of mechanical problems and navigational errors, the formation was deprived of eleven planes and the same number of gliders ⁽¹⁾. Destination of the remaining 133 British aircraft was the mouth of the Anapo river south of Syracuse, where the gliders should have descended at 22:30 of 9 July, in the sights of the British paratroopers was the Grand Bridge on that river.

Then they took off at 20:45 from Tunisia 222 C-47 "Dakota" of the American 52nd transport Wing carrying 3,405 paratroopers of the 505th Regiment and III/504th of the US 82nd Airborne Division, under the command of Col. Gavin ⁽²⁾. This number would have to touch the ground around midnight in Piano Lupo, south of Niscemi, and take possession of the crossroads between the town and the road n. 115, seven kilometers inside from the beaches of Gela ⁽³⁾.

The landing of the British paratroopers was hampered by the strong

(1) M. Blumenson: *Sicily: whose victory*, op. cit., p. 10-11.

(2) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy* op cit., P. 115

(3) See. P.F.O bottom WO.204, 4363 Folder War of 1939-1945. *Military Headquarters Papers. Allied Force Headquarters. - Sicily: notes on the planning and Assault.*

wind and navigation error of the pilots of aircraft towing, most Americans with no previous military experience, which dropped the glider prematurely or who, not identifying the predetermined areas, abstained entirely from the operation and returned to the starting points in the North Africa. The painful result was that the 133 aircraft that arrived overnight in view of Sicily no more than 115 cast off their gliders, loaded with a total remaining of 1,200 paratroopers, and of them alone, 54 landed in about the prescribed area. But among them only 12 gliders swooped exactly at the mouth of the Anapo ⁽⁴⁾.

Another 18 gliders were returned to Africa for failing to identify the landmarks and the rest fell into the sea or scattered in remote areas. However, 160 paratroopers, came out of the 12 gliders landed exactly, seized a by surprise the coastal batteries and the radio station of Cape Murro di Porco. Seventy of them, including eight officers then came to the Grand Bridge and settled here in defense, the resisting Italian counter-attack in the afternoon of the 10th, when arriving on site the II Battalion of the British 17th Infantry Brigade, belonging to the 5th Division. At that moment, however, of these 73 British paratroopers they were left alive only 19 ⁽⁵⁾.

Other British paratroopers, more or less scattered and that they had made landing further inland, with initiatives of small groups were able to cut the phone lines to the coastal commands, contributing to the near disorder of the defensive organization.

Throughout the British 1st Airborne Brigade complained in the operation 252 men drowned, 61 killed in combat and 174 prisoners and missing ⁽⁶⁾.

For their part, American paratroopers suffered no better fate. In addition to the strong wind and the inability of the pilots of the C-47 to orientate and stay in formation, there was added, in this case a large flak from Gela, Ponte Olivo and Niscemi, which

(4) G.A. Shepperd: *The Italian campaign 1943-1945*, op. cit., p. 46. These twelve gliders had all been towed by planes with personnel of the R.A.F.

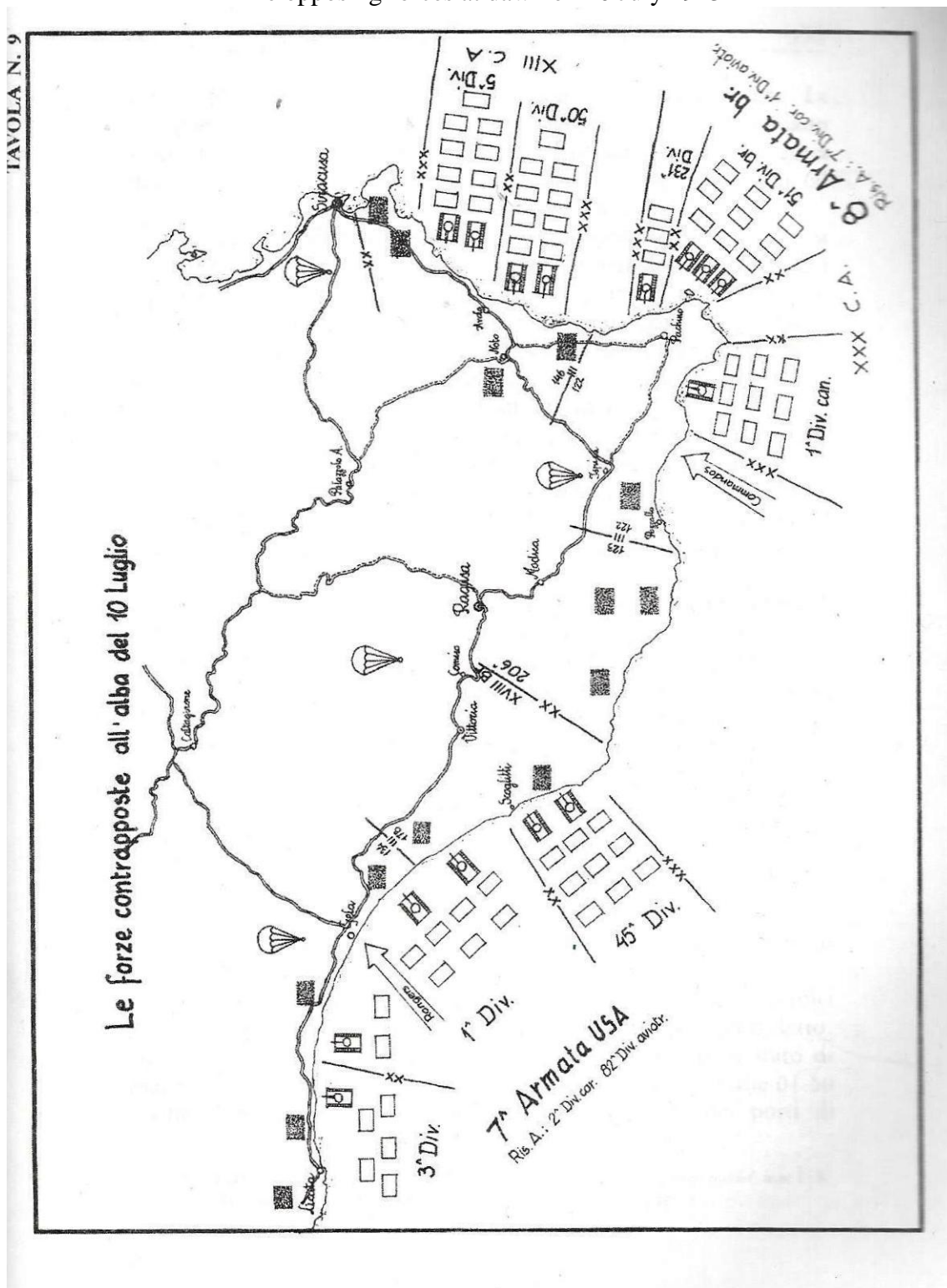
(5) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. cit., p. 58.

(6) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V cit., P. 81. The disruption caused by the few British paratroopers landed in the area of competence of the Italian 206th coastal division was so great that the commander of the unit retained their number not less than 5,000 men. See. A.U.S.E., 012 folder, the file 4.

Operations in Sicily and Calabria

Map 9

The opposing forces at dawn on 10 July 1943



were hit eight 'Dakota', however after the launch of paratroopers. The result was that only 26 planes launched exactly on Piano Lupo, while others disseminated paratroopers in a wider area about a hundred square kilometers and even at distances of 60 kilometers from the target formed by the intersection on the main road n.115,

The double failure Anglo-American aviation which opened the operation, however, brought about HUSKY, ironically, an unexpected benefit for the attackers who, precisely due to their dispersion, turned to alarm a large area of the Italian dispositions, appearing in more distant places in the rear, up to Vittoria, Comiso and St. Pietro, were estimated by the far more numerous defenders of reality. This ended up causing considerable confusion in the apparatus of Italian supervision, putting in great peril of our commands around the actual enemy targets. It is therefore recorded the already mentioned exaggerated reports of huge masses of paratroopers Anglo-Americans everywhere, while the latter, usually divided into small Groups, tended above all to create their own links.

In the midst of that confusion, which for various reasons reigned in both camps, which the assailants took advantage, although lacking connection with their commands, they acted at night with improvisation and often effectively. Among other things, a small group of American paratroopers, mistakenly launched in the area reserved to the British 8th Army while coming to a certain extent raked by N.A.P., broke the connection between the XVI Corps Command and the 206th Coastal Division. Another group, the US always, managed to overpower at Case Priolo, ten kilometers northeast of Gela, the company Capt. Della Minola, belonging to the 429th Coastal Battalion. Finally 17 missing British paratroopers, including the chaplain Reverend Hourigan, conquered alone the Punta Caderini battery in the Siracusa bay ⁽⁷⁾.

Received the first reports on the presence of enemy paratroopers along the southern coasts, Gen. Guzzoni, as we have said, changed at 01:10 on July 10 in "state of emergency" until the 19:30 of the previous day the alarm was issued, and at 01:50 he ordered the blasting of interruptions arranged in the ports of

(7). HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V, p. 81

Licata and Porro Empedocle, the latter does not actually threatened at that time because it was not included in the initial objectives of the allies. He also glanced at 01:30 the following proclamation ⁽⁸⁾:

"The enemy has started landing operations in Sicily. I have firm confidence that the population of this very island will give to the Italian troops who are going to defend its spiritual and material assistance.

United by a single will, citizens and soldiers oppose the invader a united front that will cut off his share and keep intact this land precious of Italy. Long live the KING -Viva the Duce.
General Guzzoni ".

2. THE LANDING FIELD IN UK (See Map no. 9)

The first allied contingents to make a landing coming from the sea were those belonging to the English 3rd *Commando* of Col. Slater and the two S.A.S. units of Maj. Mayne, who landed by surprise at 02:10 on July 10 on the Maddalena peninsula, north of Cape Murro di Porco, and which rapidly took of local coastal batteries "Doria Lambda" and "Emmanuel Russo", "AS 365" and "AS 493".

Meanwhile in many areas of the southern coast they were held naval interdiction bombing, not overly violent nor prolonged, even for not providing the exact location of defenders imminent landings. Then, preceded by reconnaissance teams and gives guidance, lots of submarines on board lightweight and collapsible dinghies, kayaks similar to Eskimos, the shock troops of the British 8th Army began to disembark by LCI, LCT and Dukws in the area between Punta Castelluzzo and Cape Ognina, astride Cape Passero, southern end of Sicily. As mentioned, the 8th Army of Gen. Montgomery was composed on the occasion of the XIII and XXX Corps.

The XXX Corps of Gen. Leese landed on a front of 34 kilometers between Punta Castelluzzo and Marzamemi, astride Cape Passero, on beaches defended by the 122nd Coastal Regiment of Col. D'Apollonio, belonging to the Italian 206th Coastal Div. of Gen. d'Havet, and more specifically from only the 243rd Battalion reinforced by three

(8) A.U.S.E., 2228 folder: "Historical Journal of the Military Command of the 6th Army," proclaims the population of Sicily of 10 July 1943.

companies. Local coastal artillery consisted rather in a battery of 100/22 of the CCXXIV group and of three batteries 149/35 of the CLXI group. Gave his contribution to the defense sector also invaded the 227th Battery of Pozzallo, the western end of the landing front. From west to east the three areas of the British XXX Corps landing were the scene of the following events ⁽⁹⁾.

- "Western Bark", between Punta Castelluzzo and Punta delle Formiche, where they landed first, strictly at the H hour (02:45), the Royal Marines of the 40th and 41st *Commandos*, their respective orders of Lt. Col. Manners and Lufilsden, followed by the Canadian 1st Brigade of Gen. Graham. So, with a delay of two hours, mainly due to lower depths encountered, landed the Canadian 2nd Brigade of Gen. Vokes under the support of the fire monitors *Roberts* and two destroyers⁽¹⁰⁾. This tactical assault group took possession of the abandoned Pachino airport at 09:00, the main initial target, on which, however, the Italian 321st 149/13 battery, belonging to fixed airfield defense, fired until noon. Meanwhile, at 11:00 it was also landed the 3rd Brigade of the Canada 1st Inf. Div., under the command of Gen. Penhale.

- "Southern Bark", the flanks of the Portopalo Bay, where landed the 154th Brigade of Gen. Rennie, belonging to the 51st Highland Inf. Div. of Gen. Wimberley, avoiding the center of the bay for fear of mines. The approach of this battle group was in no way hindered by the coastal defenses, but only by sea conditions, so that the Scots troops took land without losses between H hour and 04:30. At 07:30 the Scots joined with the right wing of the 1st Canadian Division and proceeded in parallel up to invest and capture the town of Pachino by noon. In the late afternoon then they landed the other two brigades of the 51st Division, that is, 152nd of Gen. Mac Millan and the 153rd of Gen. Murray.

- "Eastern Bark", interspersed by the previous area

(9) See. HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V cited. pp 59-62.

(10) The monitors were the heirs of the floating batteries of the distant Crimean War. characterized by robust protection, by a low speed and a low draft. To see the characteristics of Roberts. H.T. LENTON - J.J. COLLEDGE: *Warships of World War II*, London 1968, p. 25.

disembarking on a stretch of rocky coastline of eight kilometers. It ranged from Capo Passero and Marzamemi here the three battalions of the 231st Infantry Brigade "Malta" of Gen. Urquhart they landed on time and realized the surprise on local defenses, then move on to the evening directly under Gen. Wimberley, commander of the 51st Scottish Inf. Div.. In this area, and precisely on the beach of Marzamemi fell heroically Sub. Lt. Vincenzo Barone, decorated with a gold medal to the memory. The 231st Brigade 'Malta' is pushed towards Noto, flanked on the left by the 23rd Armored Brigade, landed later.

The XIII Corps of the British Army of General Dempsey landed 24 kilometers to the north east, in the Gulf of Noto, on a front of 20 kilometers between Calabernardo and Cape Ognina. This area was assigned to the defense of the 146th Regiment of Col. Cancellara, also belonging to the Italian 206th Coastal Division of Gen. d'Havet. The artillery available in the defense sector were the CLXIV group 149/35 with three batteries, the CCCXIV group 100/22 with two batteries and CII Group of 75/06 with two batteries. There was also, most backward, the CCXXX Semoventi Battalion of 47/32 of thirteen tracked pieces, then reduced, as we shall see, to eight.

From south to north the English XIII Corps landed in the following two areas, in which took place the events noted below.

- "Acid south", including Calabernardo and Punta Giorgi, where here made landing initially the 151st Brigade of Gen. Senior, belonging to the 50th Inf. Div. of Gen. Kirkman. While it is guided in the approach phase from reports of a submarine, the amphibious force under the orders of Adm. Troubridge had some difficulty in locating the exact landing beaches and suffered an additional delay because of the high seas and the strong wind. Therefore the first troops touched down at 4:10 and only at sunrise (05:50 hours) they had to be supported by naval gunfire to escape the fire of the Italian artillery spread around Avola.

These were silenced by 08:00 and four hours later the British riflemen entered the aforesaid town, after passing the cornerstones of the 374th Coastal Battalion at Lido di Avola, Villa di Noto and Serra la Guardia. The last stronghold to fall in this area was that of S. Venerina, where was distinguished the Sub. Lt. Luigi Adorno, Gold Medal. Even the town of Noto was

conquered in the afternoon by the British 151st brigade, after fighting at the cornerstone of Villa Petrosa.

- "Acid north", between Punta Giorgi and Cape Ognina, where the amphibious force of Adm. Troubridge put ashore the 15th and the 17th Brigade of the 5th Inf. Div. of Gen. Berney-Ficklin, respectively commanded by Gen. Rawstorne and Tarleton. This happened with an hour of average delay of schedule. By 10:00, countered effectively the Italian artillery especially by the destroyer *Eskimo*, the British troops of the 5th Division swept into the area Cassibile⁽¹¹⁾. The four cornerstones of the 430th Coastal Battalion of St. Teresa di Longarini, of the Cassibile river, of Torre Cuba and of Fontane Bianche, overcome and encircled by the British, had to give at the end facing the enemy front. In the afternoon also he landed the 13th Brigade of Gen. Campbell, who was commissioned to go inside right away to Floridia, while the 17th Brigade followed the coastal road to Syracuse and the S.A.S. and the *Commandos* were already operating in the area of this city and in the Magdalene peninsula. The remaining brigade of the 5th Inf. Div., that is, the 15th, was instead ordered to defend for the moment the beachhead⁽¹²⁾.

3. THE LANDING IN THE AMERICAN SECTOR (See Map n. 10)

Guided by British submarine buoys, the shock troops of the US 7th Army of General Patton made their landing in the stretch of coastline to the west of the southern tip of Sicily, between Torre di Gaffe and Punta Braccetto, divided into three columns, "Joss," "Dime" and "Cent", each of which split into three to four attack contingents. Their approach was greatly hindered by exposure of the chosen landing beaches to the west winds and in general it can be said that the Americans suffered more than the British from the inclement weather.

Here are the details of the U.S.A. landings from west to east.

- Column "Joss," with the goal as Licata and then the Salso Valley.

(11) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V cit., P. 59.

(12) *Ibid*, p. 81.

It included the 3rd Inf. Div. of Gen. Truscott and a Rangers Battalion and was divided into four contingents of attack between Torre di Gaffe and Punta Due Rocche. The front landing, 21 kilometers long, was defended by the 139th Regiment of the Italian 207th Coastal Division of Gen. Schreiber, who made use of CXLV group Art. with two batteries 105/27 and a battery of 75/34, as well as the armed train of the Royal Navy 76-11-T with four 76 mm. guns, remained blocked on a pier of the port of Licata for the demolition works put in place by the defenders.

From west to east, the four attack contingents of the column "JOSS" were as follows.

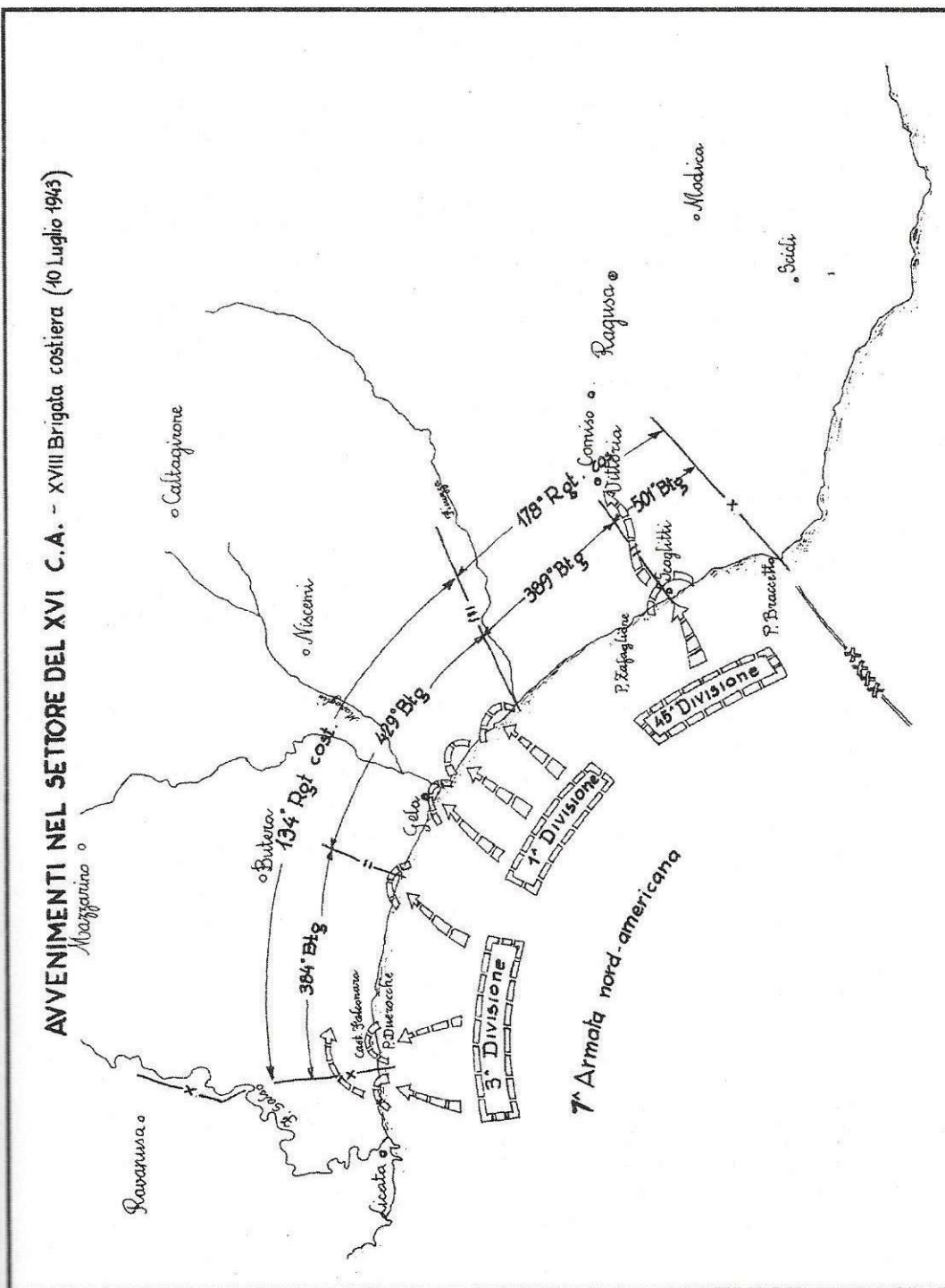
1) Contingent of attack on Torre Gaffe, consisting of three battalions of the 7th Regimental Tactical Group of Col. Sherman and landed on the so-called beach 73, eight kilometers to the west of Licata, between 04:35 and 05:00 of the July 10, 1943. In this area, the attackers called the Italian fire "intense", which began to beat the waters off at 04:10 and was followed half an hour later by ineffective attacks of Axis aircraft. Between 06:00 and 06:30 intervened in succession the destroyer *Buck* and the cruiser *Brooklyn*, whose fire allowed the American infantry spread into the interior ⁽¹³⁾.

2) Contingent of attack on Molla, consisting of the 111th Rangers Battalion and the II Battalion of the 15th Inf. Regiment under the command of Lt. Col. Bracy and landed on two neighboring beaches 71st and 72nd at the western end of Monte Sole. The troops made the landing between 03:00 and 03:40 and at dawn the American avant-garde entered the outskirts of Licata then seizing the whole town by 11:30, after taking numerous prisoners. In these waters, as we have reported previously, he was struck by German bombers at 05:15 and 06:00 minesweeper *Sentinel*, who reported ten dead and fifty wounded, and then sank at 10:30.

3) Contingent of attack on Salsa, formed by I and III Battalion of the 15th Regimental Battle Group command by Col. Johnson, made their landing between 03:40 and 04:45 on the beach 70 West, 2.5 kilometers east of the mouth of the river Salso. These troops landed without encountering excessive resistance and then a rejected

(13) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit.; p. 133.

TAVOLA N. 10



counterattack led by elements of the Italian 538th Coastal Battalion, occupying the airport of Licata,

4) Contingent of attack on Falconara, represented by the three battalions of the 30th Regimental Tactical Group of Col. Rogers, who set foot on the so-called 70 East Beach at the eastern end of the "Joss" column - bounded by Punta Due Rocche, between 03:15 and 4:22 under "weak and ineffective" Italian fire. Also in this area is pointed out the cruiser *Brooklyn*, along the cruiser *Birmingham*, fought with success, from 04:45, the Italian batteries on the flanks overlooking Monte Desusino, using catapulted seaplanes for the direction of the fire, these batteries were indeed silenced before 09:18, after two Italian shells had just missed as many American ships, including the command ship *Biscayne* of Adm. Conolly.

The entire column 'Joss' does not encountered major obstacles and before the third night the US Inf. Div. gained more ground than expected, conceding less than a hundred dead and wounded, that loss significantly lower than budgeted ⁽¹⁴⁾. In summary, the 7th Regimental Battle Group occupied good positions on the hills overlooking Licata, the Rangers and the 15th Regimental Tactical Group took over the city and the mouth of the Salsa including the airport, while the 30th Regimental Tactical Group conquered Montt Desusino and hills adjacent on the right flank of the beachhead. Whole sector of Litata the number of captured Italian soldiers, according to allied sources, were about 3,000 in just the first day of fighting.

In addition to the often mentioned loss of minesweepers *Sentinel*, Americans reported in the "Joss" area a collision between the two destroyers *Roe* and *Swanson* at 02:55, resulting in serious damage which forced the two ships to repair in Malta and Bizerte, albeit without any dead or injured on board.

- Column "Dime", with the goal of Gela and then the Ponte Olivo airport. It was composed by the 1st Inf. Div. of Gen. Allen and two Ranger Battalions, who landed on a front of less than 41 kilometers from Punta Due Rocche and Punta Zafaglione. This sector was defended by the 134th Regiment of Col. Altini and the 389th Battalion, belonging to the 18th Coastal Brigade of Gen. Mariscalco,

(14) *Ibid*, p. 135.

while the Italian artillery consisted of two batteries of 75/27 of the XXI Group in Capo Soprano, of the 81st battery at Manfria of 75/34, of the 75th battery 149/35 of CLXII group at Spinasantà, two batteries 100/22 Poggio Lungo and of a battery of the same caliber in Monte S. Nicola, all belonging to CCIX group. American 'Dime' column was divided into the following three attack contingents.

1) Force "X" of Lt. Col. Darby with two pioneers Battalions, the first and fourth Ranger Battalions three mortars companies, which landed starting at 03:15 hours on the so-called beach 68 near the jetty of Gela ⁽¹⁵⁾. The landing was hampered by mines and crossfire of two machine gun nests, so much so that an American company lost almost an entire platoon. However, the stations were silenced by the use of Hand grenades and flame throwers and the three companies Rangers 08:00 entered in Gela. The Americans then consolidated their positions in this sector after rejecting, as we shall see, the counter of the Italian mobile unit "E".

2) Contingent of attack of Col. Bowen, including the I and II Battalion of the 26th Regimental Tactical Group, who landed on time between 02:45 and 03:30 on the so-called beach 67 West, east of the Gela river. Some difficulties caused by mines did not prevent the prompt penetration toward Farello of these American troops, supported by the fire on the occasion of the cruiser *Boise* and the destroyer *Jefferson*.

3) Contingent attack of Col. Taylor, composed of three battalions of the 16th Regimental Tactical Group landed before 04:00 hours on the beach 67 East, between the mouths of Gela and Dirillo. Also in this area mines and machine-gun emplacements constituted the main obstacles the American advance and the tenacity of the local defenders, members of the 429th Coastal Battalion of Major Rubellino, was witnessed by the number of Italians killed, that reached the figure of 197 between dead and wounded ⁽¹⁶⁾. Moreover it was precisely in the waters off the beaches that recorded the aforementioned sinking of the US destroyer *Maddox*, struck at 04:58 by a German Ju. 88 and sunk abruptly with 211 victims. We should add

(15) *Ibid*, p. 136,

(16) E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 113,

to regard that at 18:35 another Germanic plane, this time a Bf. 109 fighter with wing bombs, destroyed the ship landing *LST-313*, loaded with anti-tank pieces. It will then be precisely against the whole column "Dime" which, as we will see in detail below, there will develop the most insistent and aggressive Italian-German ground counter-attack between 10 and 11 July.

-Column "Cent" The objective is for Scoglitti and then the Comiso airport and Biscari. It was composed by the 45th Inf. Div. of Gen. Middleton, who made a landing on a front of only 17 km from Punta Zafaglione and Punta Braccetto. This sector was defended by a part of the 178th Coastal Regiment of Col. Sebastianello (501st Battalion. and part of the 389th Battalion.) belongs to the XVIII Coastal Brigade. The artillery consisted of three 75/27 batteries of the XXI Group, located in Punta Zafaglione, S. Croce Carnerina and Case Strasattata. The column 'Cent' was further divided into the following three with attack echelons.

1) Attack Contingent of Col. Cookson with three battalions of the 180th Regimental Tactical Group, which should have landed on the beach 66 north directly in front of Scoglitti, but instead landed in a big mess, and with considerable delay. Indeed, the first troops landed only at 4:34 and, due to unforeseen difficulties of landing identification, the regimental command was brought by amphibious vehicles far to the northwest, even at the mouth of the river Dirillo in the "Dime" sector of the 1st Division while the remaining units were scattered across the entire front of the "Cent". According to the allied official sources, the U.S.A. 180th Regimental Battle Group was "the only contingent entire US amphibious force to be completely disorganized by improper landings" ⁽¹⁷⁾.

2) This Attack Contingent of Col. Hutchins, composed of three battalions of the 179th Regimental Tactical Group, who landed on the beach 66 south, east of Scoglitti. It was the first group of column 'Cent' to make a landing, beginning at 03:45, and to conquer Scoglitti at 14:00 after overcoming the resistance of the 389th Coastal Battalion. The latter defense units had remained in turn deprived of artillery coverage because of the deadly

(17) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War -U.K. military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, Vol. V. cit., P. 62.

counter-battery fire of the two destroyers *Tillman* and *Knight* and the cruiser *Philadelphia*.

3) Attack Contingent of Col. Anckorn, that with the three battalions of the 157th Regimental Tactical Group landed at 3:55 south of Punta Grande Branco, at Punta Braccetto, on an unnumbered beach by US planners. This contingent suffered greatly from the sea conditions, landed not exactly in the places designated and had drowned in its ranks 27⁽¹⁸⁾. Nevertheless it penetrated quite easily inside, heading east, past the defenses of the 501st Coastal Battalion, attacked on his right side the adjacent 383rd Battalion belonging to 206th Coastal Div. and, having captured about five hundred prisoners, seized at 15:45 in the village of Santa Croce Camerina, located seven kilometers inside, and that was the seat of the command of the same 383rd Coastal Battalion.

Examined landings in individual Anglo-American areas, it must be said, finally, that the boundary between the areas of competence of the U.S.A. 7th Army left and the British 8th Army on the right had been identified by Allied planners inland between Pozzallo sul Mare and Vizzini (Monti Iblei), but had not been traced beyond this resort⁽¹⁹⁾. As we shall see, only .13 July, General Alexander, interpreting the desire of Montgomery, attributed the British 8th Army use the line Vizzini - Caltagirone -Piazza Armerina on the crossroads of route no. 124, on which they were bearing down simultaneously from the south columns of the American 45th Inf. Div. from Scoglitti.

4. THE FIRST NEWS ON THE INVASION AND THE INITIAL ITALIAN-GERMAN AIR REACTIONS

The after of the invasion of Sicily information that arrived at operating centers in Rome in those decisive hours is strongly reproduced in the Supermarina bulletin n. 1113, concerning the “Operational News at 12:00 on 10 July 1943”

(18) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit. p. 144.

(19) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V cit., P. 77.

sent a copy -as usual -this Supreme Command. Here's the sequence, which includes both timely information, both detectable inaccuracies, as the hour 01:45 on a feared landing in Port Empedocle ⁽²⁰⁾.

"First news on the landing in Sicily.

-At 20:20 of the July 9 Syracuse was bombarded from the sea. -At 22:00 on 9 July would be another naval bombardment that took place on Syracuse.

-At 23:30 9 Licata was subjected to artillery fire and were likely to be launched paratroopers on the Catania plain.

-At 00:30 of July 10 there are was ground fighting at Capo Passero.

-At 00:45 they were launched paratroopers in the Ragusa area.

-At 01:10 Commander of the Armed Forces Sicily has given the "state of emergency order."

-At 01:17 the coast at Catania was bombarded by heavy naval artillery.

-At 01:45 the enemy appeared on approach at the coast of Port Empedocle.

-Communication of 03:15 hours intercepted by a German station of the German Navy: British troops landed by glider on the Maddalena peninsula and the river Anapo (Syracuse).

Fighting at the airport in Syracuse, and was asked intervention of Army troops.

-At About 05:00 began the enemy landing at Gela.

-At 06:45 troops southwest of Sicily reported that they have not made contact with the enemy.

-At 07:32 Port Empedocle announced: "port facilities and the port destroyed."

-At 08. 33 there was a violent attempt to enemy landing in the port of Syracuse and the peninsula to the south.

-At 08:36 he was being a violent attempt to enemy landing at Augusta" ⁽²¹⁾.

This same news of Supermarina, having also provided a long list of sightings of enemy convoys, which we already mentioned in footnote 84 of Chapter V, however, concluding that it was "not yet possible to make any concrete assessment of the forces participating in the operation."

On the same morning of 10 July Supermarina he informed the Supreme Command of the countermeasures adopted. They were resolved

(20) A.U.S.E., 1501 folder, attachment 398: day Supermarina bulletin n. 1113 containing the Operational News at 12.00 on July 10, 1943.

(21) No direct landing had been tried by the Allies on Syracuse and Augusta, but occurred only the landing of the *Commandos* and S.A.S. British on the Magdalene peninsula.

synthetically in ensuring that the fleet would be ready to move into battle that day, and torpedo boats and submarines had already been conveyed to the Sicilian waters ⁽²²⁾.

As is known, the battle fleet was however not made to sail, what sparked the already mentioned controversy not only in Italy but also abroad ⁽²³⁾.

For its part, the Supreme Command, who became a first picture of the situation, so anxious to counter immediately from heaven the most dangerous enemies and landings at 11:35 on 10 July reported to Superaereo and to the German O.B.S. demands of Gen. Guzzoni for "Immediate massive air strikes against enemy vessels in areas of Augusta - Siracusa - Gela - Licata" ⁽²⁴⁾.

We must say that, taking into account the already examined the availability of aircraft in the Central Mediterranean, the Axis Aerial Commands they destined to operate in support of operations in Sicily between 11 and 15 July the in the following amounts ⁽²⁵⁾:

- 11 July: 198 Italian planes and 283 German planes;
- 12 July: 171 Italian planes and 202 German planes;
- 13 July: 197 Italian planes and 164 German planes;
- 14 July: 88 Italian planes and 156 German planes;
- 15 July: 76 Italian planes and 85 German planes.

Of course not all of these aircraft took part in the actual fighting, due to failures and damage occurring.

* * *

We have already examined the attacks of aircraft and of German-Italian insidious weapons against Allied convoys approaching and during the first few hours of landing. Let's see how developed in the heavens so the contrast of the Axis during the entire day of 10 July, excluding the above referred statement summarizing concerning amount of air operations.

Since the evening of 9 July, to coincide with the launch of

(22) A.U.S.E., 1501 folder, attachment 459: dispatch n. 10181 of July 10, 1943.

(23) De Risio example reminds us that even in September 1966, the Greek newspaper "Akropolis" condemned the retrospective inability of the Italian Navy "to even protect their territorial waters," See, C, De Risio: *Natii di ferro, teste di legno: la Marina italiana ieri e oggi*, op. cit., p. 953

(24) A.U.S.E., 1501 folder, attachment 481, message no. 51452/op of 11:35 hours of July 10, 1943.

(25) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V cit., P. 97.

first Italian-German squadrons against the advancing enemy naval formations; Superaereo had given orders to reinforce its the now reduced flight units of Sicily and the 4th Air Fleet. During the day following therefore flowed island a dive bomber group and two d 'assault groups, and arrived in Calabria and Apulia, three dive bomber groups, four assault groups and a bomber group in the form of Sm. 84 ⁽²⁶⁾.

All the above mentioned units, conveyed closer to the enemy invasion area, however, were affected by the insufficient coverage of the fighters in front of the well-organized and nourished the Anglo-American air defense. Italian bombers and torpedo planes were for what forced to operate mainly at night, but even so suffering considerable losses due to the presence of Allied night fighters who often chased the raiders up over their bases to machine gun them during the landing phase ⁽²⁷⁾.

For its part the German 2nd *Luftflotte* activity took place significantly more intense, especially since he could benefit from a general greater autonomy of its aircraft, which allowed them to take off from airports further away and therefore less subject to the enemy raids, as well as unquestionably superior equipment to those of the Italians of the period.

In the British sector, the first incursion of the Germans Bf, 110 and FW. 190 began shortly after 10:00 and in the afternoon, during an heavier action, some ships were framed by bombs and two media reported damages of a LCT landing shots to the fallen in their vicinity. But the German attacks had better luck in the American sector, which was then almost devoid of air protection due to insufficient collaboration between the fighters of R.A.F., in charge of that task, and the US ships.

In the afternoon, so the attacking aircraft of the II *Fliegerkorps* caused in the bay of Gela damage to the destroyer *Murphy*, who had water infiltration drops bombs from the hull, and the already mentioned sinking at 18:35 of the landing ship tanks *LST -313*, destroyed by a explosion

(26) E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit, p. 135.

(27) G. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II cit., Pag.542.

of loaded ammunition. They failed to return to the base from the daytime missions a FW.190 assault and four Bf. 109 fighters.

At the fall of darkness of July 10 units of II *Fliegerkorps* returned to the attack. Forty-eight Ju.88 brought it in the British sector and, having missed out on the anti-aircraft ship *Alybank*, they took aim hospital ships *Talamba* and *Aba*, evenly lit and marked, sinking the first five miles off Avola, with considerable loss of life ⁽²⁸⁾,

In the night also R. Air Force, as has been said, took his units to attack and precisely eleven three-engined Cant C.1007 and four new four-engined P.108 against American ships in front of Gela, including twelve torpedo bombers Sm. 79 in the British zone. These raids, however, did not achieve any results and they failed to return three Sm. 79 and a P. 108.

A new assault wave of forty-eight Germans Ju.88 closed the attacks of the day, procuring damage to the British monitor *Erebus* near Capo Passero.

Also at the O.B.S meanwhile Kesselring had done during the day to strengthen the German air deployment in southern Italy, ordering rearward units of the 2nd *Luftflotte* to move further south in order to operate on the endangered Sicilian coast with greater intensity. Therefore the basic German assault groups in Ciampino and in Naples and those displaced by the bombers in northern Italy and even France moved immediately in the airports of the Pugile, realizing a more appropriate concentration of forces,

5. REACTION OF THE 206th COASTAL DIVISION IN THE BRITISH SECTOR (See map n. 11)

To cope with the entire landing of the British 8th Army was allocated straddling the south-eastern tip of Sicily, between Punta Braccetto and Capo Ognina, the 206th Italian Coastal Division of Gen. d'Havet, part of the XVI Corps, for the composition of which are provided in appendix n. 8 in the appendixes.

(28) A. Santoni - F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, and HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V cit., P. 66.

The division, which had their headquarters in Modica, lined up at that time, on a front of 132 kilometers of the sea, 450 officers and 9,600 noncommissioned officers and enlisted men (65% Sicilian) divided into eight infantry battalions, five groups of artillery and five anti-parachutist units ⁽²⁹⁾.

Between 21:00 and 21:45 on 9 July by the various observation posts and divisional listening posts began to be reported numerous enemy aircraft at very low altitude, which he did immediately suspect a launch of paratroopers. In fact the latter landed a little later and were identified as of midnight, then being rounded up in part by N. A. P., who captured 174, but not before the connections to the headquarters and had been sabotaged and broken at the ends of the division.

The same paratroopers, some of which were American landed for error between Modica and the sea in the 123rd Coastal Regiment sector, managed to surround some Italian batteries and put them out of action with hand grenades and flamethrowers.

Subsequent landings from the sea and the progression of the enemy, reported late to the Command of the 206th Division because of these interruptions of connections, convinced Gen. d'Havet to order at 07:00 on 10 July the use near Noto of the 437th Coastal Battalion, who was the reserve unit of the 146th Regiment, as well as eight 47/32 Semoventi of the CCXXX Battalion of Maj. Elena ⁽³⁰⁾.

At the same time he ordered tactical group "South" of Consul Busalacchi to advance from Ispica in two columns (right La Marza and Pachino) center to contain the enemy and throw him overboard. This tactical group was made-up of the Command of the 173rd Camicie Nere Legion, by the CLXXIII CC.NN. Battalion, the 174th CC.NN. machine gun company, by the 2nd mortar company of the LIV Battalion. "Napoli", by the 1st 47/32 Anti-tank platoon and by the I Group of 100/17 and of the 54th Art. Regiment. " Napoli ". It encountered the English at 10:00 at the cornerstone of Case Gradante and then at 12:30 on

(29) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of Gen. d'Havet on December 1, 1945", p. 7. This report also highlights that at the end of June 1943 were in work in the 206th Coastal Div sector. thousand machine gun and cannon, 250 kilometers of cross-linked trapezoidal fence, eight kilometers of anti-tank ditches and 15,000 mines.

(30) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attached 59/6, "Report on the conduct of the 206th Coastal Division operations."

the roadway for Pachino, engaging in a series of clashes until midnight, when he was forced to fall back on Modica ⁽³¹⁾.

At 10:00 also mobile group "F" of Maj. Argenziano, located in Rosolini, was commissioned to advance towards Pachino and it moves within fifteen minutes with a tank company with ten Renault R/35 tanks, a 47/32 anti-tank company, a company of the 542nd Coastal Bersaglieri Battalion, motorized, a motorized machine gun company and a battery of 75/06 CXXVI motorized group.

At the Noto-Pachino roadway junction Mobile Group 'F' made contact at 13:00 with the avant-garde of the Scottish 51st Inf. Div., already firmly attest to the surrounding hills. After losing four tanks, the tank company of Capt. Da Conto withdrew towards Rosolini at 15:00 and an hour later the Scots went decidedly on the offensive, supported by flanking contingents of the 231st Brigade "Malta" capturing some elements of the Bersaglieri and the machine gun companies. The remains of the mobile unit "F" retreated to the stronghold of Bonivini-Modica, already manned by a platoon of the 243rd Coastal Battalion and the third battery of the CCXXIV group of 100/22 ⁽³²⁾.

Also at 10:00 Gen. d'Havet, found that on the western end of the deployment of the 206th Coastal Div. elements of the 157th Regiment of the American 45th Inf. Div., landed in the coastal area of the XVIII Brigade, were infiltrating the right flank of the 383rd Battalion, had authorized Col. Primavera, commander of the 123rd Coastal Regiment, to face this new threat, sending on site reinforcement the headquarters and two companies of the 542nd Coastal Bersaglieri Battalion stationed in Scicli.

In the above sector held by the 383rd Coastal Battalion attacked by paratroopers and part of the American 157th Regiment coming from Scoglitti area, occurred on the day of the 10th isolated actions around the various strongholds. At 07:30 and fell at 08:00 respectively, the cornerstone of Villa Comitini, defended by twenty-two men under the command of Capt. Serra who was killed heroically, and the cornerstone of Case Cameni, manned by fifteen

(31) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annexed 59/11. "Report on the use of tactical group" South ".

(32) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annexed 59/12 "Report on the military operations carried out by the mobile group" F "stationed in Rosolini."

men of Lt. Sella, also was killed on the field ⁽³³⁾. Half an hour later was overrun the roadblock of Villa Criscione and at 15:45 was blown away the same headquarters of the 383rd Battalion at S. Croce Carrlerina, to whose defense also actively took part in a dozen armed civilians with muskets and grenades.

Between 18:00 and 18:30 in the same sector fell Marina di Ragusa, Punta Secca and the route 451 roadblock south of S. Croce Camerina. Finally, at 19:00, after spirited fight, was silenced by naval gunfire, directed by catapulted seaplanes, also the 73rd battery of 149/35 of the CLXII group. Instead resisted even the isolated stronghold of Cozzo Cappello, which only fell at 11:00 of the following day ⁽³⁴⁾.

Meanwhile in the central sector, governed by the 122nd Coastal Regiment of Col. D'Apollonio, the English of the 40th and 41st *Commando* and the Canadian 1st Division, then who were joined by the contiguous 154th Scottish Brigade had entered the abandoned airport of Pachino at 09:00 and they took over the town by noon, silencing the 321st battery of 149/13 and cutting off of the 243rd Coastal Battalion headquarters ⁽³⁵⁾. The Tactical Command of the 122nd Coastal Regiment withdrew at first also to the stronghold of Bonivini-Modica, but at 17:30, unable to communicate with any unit from that position, he withdrew to Rosolini and then on Ispica ⁽³⁶⁾.

In the sector in the left of the 206th Coastal Division, defended by the 146th Regiment. Of Col. Cancellara and initially attacked by three brigades from the British 5th and the 50th Inf. Div. as well as by the right wing of the 231st Brigade "Malta." fell by midday the cornerstones Cassibile and Avola. The British then moved on Noto, which penetrated at 18:30 by the men of the 231st Brigade overwhelmed after a hard fight the last stronghold of Villa Petrosa ⁽³⁷⁾.

In the later sector, in which was the highest number of casualties,

(33) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attached 59/8, "Report of the 123rd Regiment. coastal Scicli. "

(34) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attachment 59/6.

(35) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, Annex 59/10: "Report of Col. art. Romeo Escalar, 44th Artillery grouping of 206th Div. coast. "

(36) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annexed 59/7 "Report events of the 122nd Infantry Regiment coastal".

(37) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of Gen. d'Havet on December 1, 1945, and 1427 folder, attachment 59/9, "Report of the 146th coastal regiment."

they certainly not profited to the morale of the defenders the uncontrolled afternoon news on the fall of the Syracuse Base, reported by fleeing sailors and soldiers, as we shall see, other than the base ⁽³⁸⁾. It was also a reason of inner bitterness, "the firm belief that the enemy was informed by civilians of the fifth column, indicating the targets to beat and of the country lanes to accomplish the encirclement" ⁽³⁹⁾.

At the end of the first day of the fighting the 206th Coastal Division thus had to suffer in various ways the enemy infiltration, staying for most of the day isolated by phone from Corps Command. At midnight there were still anchored in the next few cornerstones to the beaches only the 381st Battalion to the west and the adjacent 375th Battalion at the center, both in areas not attacked from the sea, but still they threatened by circumvention from behind. In the hinterland of the most important positions occupied by the British were Pachino, Noto, Avola and Cassibile, while around Comiso and Modica were operating units of American paratroopers and at Vittoria, further to the west, had fallen into the hands of the III/179th Inf. of the US 45th Div.

6. THE REACTION OF THE XVIII COASTAL BRIGADE IN THE AMERICAN SECTOR (See Maps n. 12 and n. 13)

The landing of the columns "Dime" and "Cent" of the US 7th Army, respectively, in the areas of Gela and Scoglitti, took place in the defending zone of the XVIII Coastal Brigade of Gen. Mariscalco that, headquarters based at Nislemi, it was also part of the of the XVI Corps and the composition of which can be found in the mentioned appendix 8 in the appendixes ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Starting at 01:35 was reported in this area of 58 km, between Punta Due Rocche and Punta Braccetto, the presence of American paratroopers and at 02:50 was perceived the landing operation at Senia Ferrata ⁽⁴¹⁾.

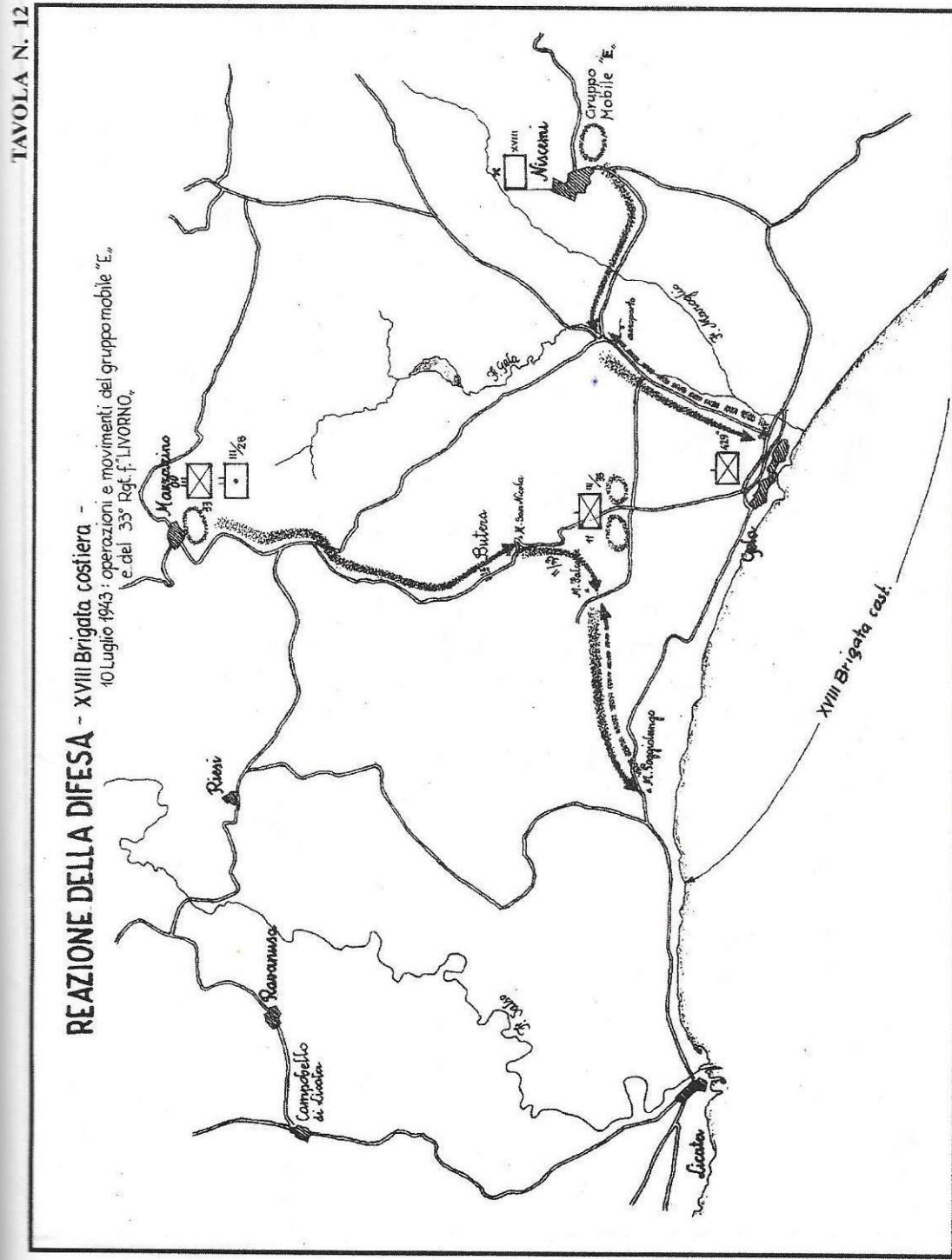
(38) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annexed 59/9 quoted, p. 3

(39) A.U.S.E., 59/9 folder: "Report of the 146th regiment coastal" p. 6

(40) It is recalled that the column "JOSS" of the US 7th Army landed instead in the Licata sector defended by the 207th Coastal Div, part of XII Corps.

(41) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Report on the operations in this sector of the XVI Corps from day 10 to day 20 July 1943".

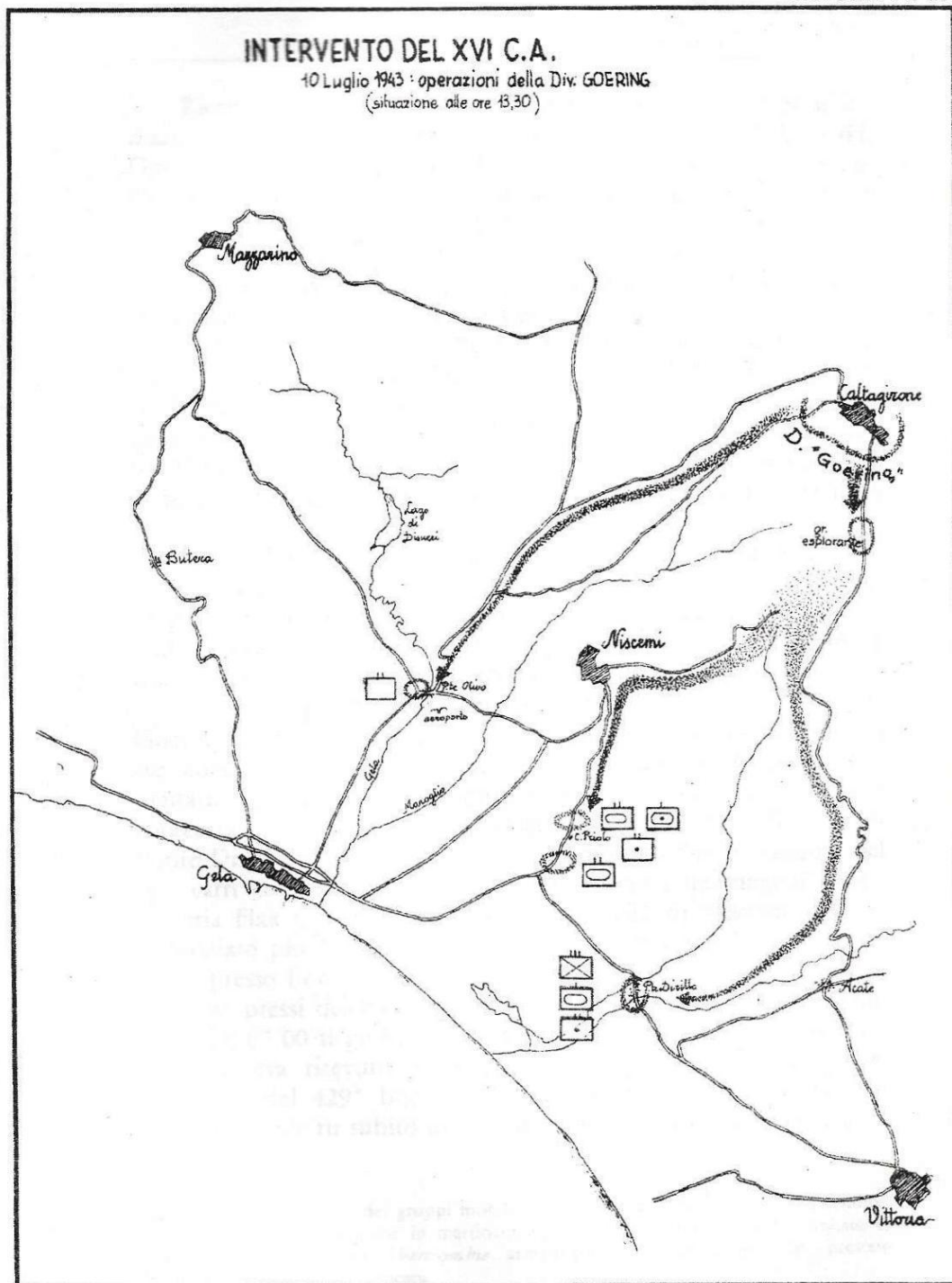
REACTION OF DEFENCE-XVIII Coastal Brigade - 10 July 1943 operations and movements of the mobile unit "E" and of the 33rd Inf. Regiment LIVORNO



INTERVENTION OF XVI CORPS

10 July 1943 operations of the GOERING Div. (situation at 13:30 hours)

TAVOLA N. 13



Received this news, the commander of the XVI Corps, General Carlo Rossi, ordered at 03:15 the German "*H. Goering*" division to move from Caltagirone towards Senia Ferrata. Then at 03:40 the same Gen. Rossi ordered that the mobile unit "E" of Niscemi, commanded by Capt. Granieri, to be put at the disposal of XVIII Coastal Brigade, moving on the Gela roadway towards the Ponte Olivo airport, however not to commit before receiving further orders.

Five minutes later, at 03:45, the Command of the XVI Corps ordered the mobile unit "H" of Caltagirone of Lt. Col. Cixi to move five kilometers south of the town, with an orientation to act toward the airport of St. Pietro. This group arrived at 05:00 at Poggio Guazzarella, one kilometer from the established position, flanked by a combat section of German *Flak* ⁽⁴²⁾.

Finally at 04:00 Gen. Rossi ordered the III Battalion of the 33rd Inf. Regiment "Livorno" and III Group of the 28th Art. Regiment, made available to him by the Army Command, to move by truck from Butera station to Monte Poggio Lungo, at the western end of the deployment of the XVIII Coastal Brigade.

Based on orders received, the "*H. Goering*" division command established to advance towards the beaches of Gela and Scoglitti on three columns. To the left stood the Germans Grenadier Regiment on the move with an artillery unit and a tank company with 17 heavy "Tiger" tanks to attack in the direction of Ponte Dirillo -Senia Ferrata; the center moved two battalions of the Tank Regiment with the IV Art. Group, a fog cannon (Nebelwerfer) battery and a *Flak* battery focusing on Ponte Olivo to the south of Niscemi, while at a distance the rightmost Pioneers Battalion had to reach Ponte Olivo at the airport of the same name.

Near the crossroads of the Gela plain was reached in the meantime since the 07:00 Mobile Group "E" of Niscemi, that an hour and a half had received the expected orders to go to the help of the Command of the 429th Coastal Battalion surrounded by the enemy. This mobile unit was immediately engaged by the artillery of the cruiser

(42) For the composition of the mobile groups 'E' and 'H' see appendix n. 8 in the appendixes. On this occasion it is recalled that in the morning directly intervened against the town of Niscemi the English monitor *Abercrombie*, armed with two guns of 381 mm., Loaned temporarily to the Americans.

Bolse and airstrikes⁽⁴³⁾. However five Renault R/35 tanks, survivors of the original twelve members of the 1st company of the CI battalion, penetrated up area and waged a tough battle with the Americans *Rangers* Force "X" of the Lt. Col. Darby, who were still deprived of their anti-tank guns⁽⁴⁴⁾. Here they were knocked out two more R/35 and four 47/32 pieces of the 2nd anti-tank company of the CII battalion, along with many tractors, affected both by naval fire and from bazookas.

Therefore, while the possession of Gela was established by the Americans before 11:55, mobile group "E" was forced to retreat to Monte Casrelluccio at the airport Ponte Olivo) by contacting the right hand column of the "*H. Goering*" Division of Gen. Conrath.

The latter German units attacked in the day with the two columns of the center and of the left. The armored column reached Case Priolo at 13:30 and had just engaged in fighting the American 2nd Battalion of the 16th Tactical Group, that shortly before 14:00 Gen. Conrath received by Gen. Rossi - as we shall see in chapter VIII - the notice to prepare to develop a coordinated attack with the "Livorno" Div. on the basis of successive orders for confirmation. Gen. Conrath said it could not predict such a coordinated attack the day, because "a systematic counter-offensive" could be developed only after having joined all the contingents of the "*H. Goering*" at that time divided⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Meanwhile the German left column, which included all the limited infantry of the "*H. Goering*" was blocked by the USA I/180th Regiment and lost contact with the Division Command.

At midday came more bad news from the two eastern and western extremities of the deployment of XVIII coastal Brigade. In the area of Scoglitti, in fact, it had been surrounded by US paratroopers the headquarters of the 501st Coastal Battalion at Farroria Randello, and to the west of Monte Poggio positions along had fallen at noon in the hands of Force "X" of the

(43) S.E. MORISON: *In guerra su due oceani* op. cit., p. 253-254.

(44) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, Op. cit. p. 151- 152.

(45) A.U.S.E., folder 1427 "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps." p. 37,

Lt. Col. Darby. Here in the morning the III/33rd Inf. "Livorno" of Lt. Col. Bruni, coming from Butera station based on the known order of Gen. Rossi, had unsuccessfully attempted at first a counterattack against two companies of Americans *Rangers*, who operated three captured Italian guns ⁽⁴⁶⁾. This attempt failed, the Bruni battalion suffered the enemy counter maneuver and was forced to fall back on the cornerstones of Poggio della Femmina and Monte del Falcone where, in the course of the night, he was joined by the II Battalion of the same regiment, 33rd ⁽⁴⁷⁾.

The new alignment of the II and III Battalion of the 33rd Inf. "Livorno" then passes the station of Butera, Mount Falcone, Poggio della Femmina, Monte S. Nicola, Monte dell'Apa and Monte Zai.

The last counterattack on July 10 in the Gela area you once again tempted by the left column of the "H. Goering" Div., which in mid-afternoon resumed contact with the command of Gen. Conrath and renewed its attack against the I Battalion of the American 180th Inf. Regiment along the Dirillo Valley between Biscari and route n. 115 roadway managing to also capture the commander of the US battalion, Col. Schaefer. To save the tide of battle in that area, which they turned for the worst for the Americans, however, intervened just in time the U. S. A. III/180th, which eventually forced the Germans to retreat ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

7. THE REACTION OF THE 207th COASTAL DIVISION IN THE AMERICAN SECTOR. (See map n. 14)

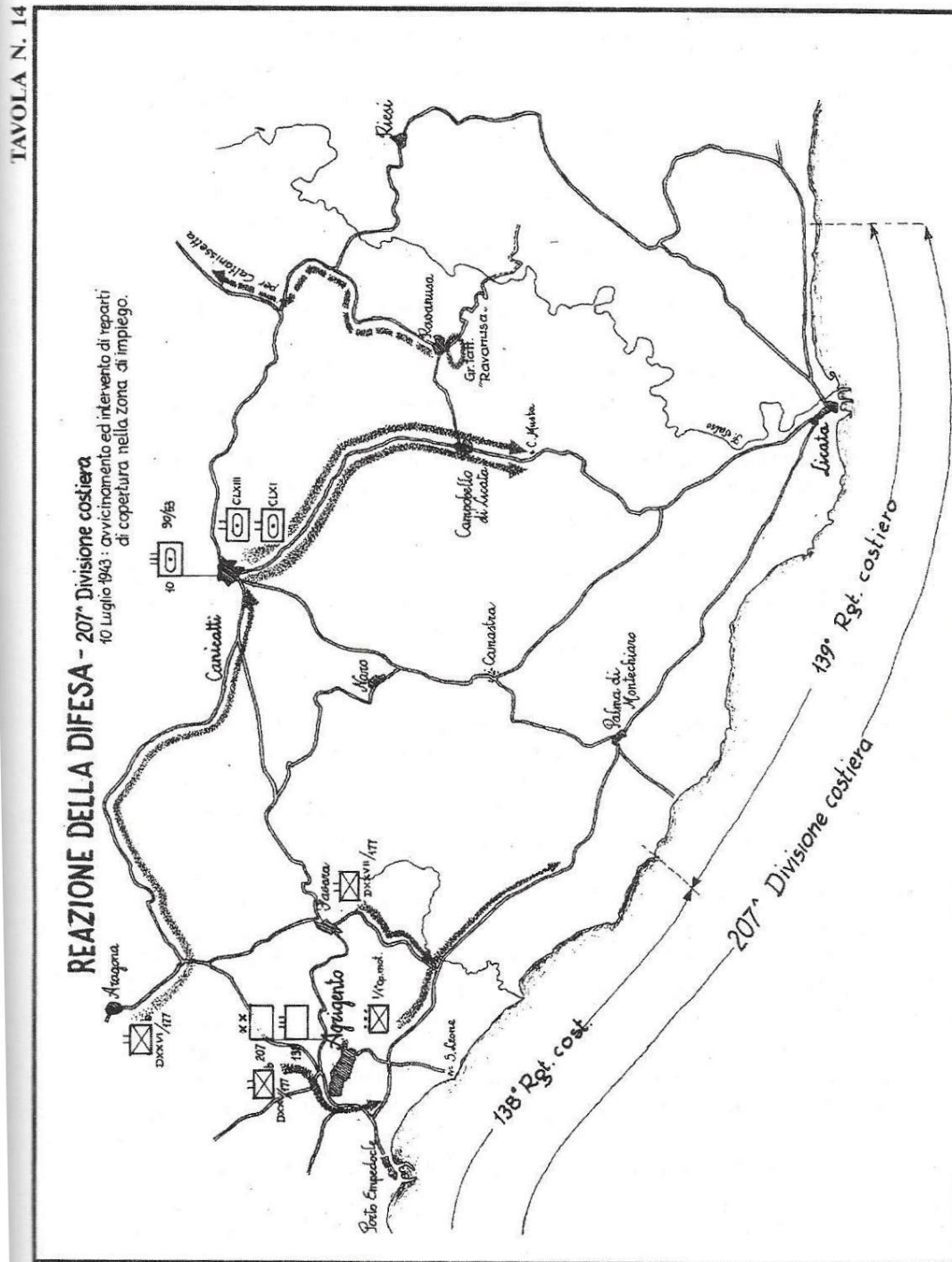
The left wing of the front of American landing, represented by column "Joss" and directed against Licata, ran into the Italian 139th Coastal Regiment, part of the 207th Coastal Div. of Gen. Schreiber, the composition of which are provided in Annex. 8 in the appendixes. This coastal division, deployed between Torre Macauda and Punta Due Rocche and having its registered headquarters on the outskirts of Agrigento, therefore, was the only unit framed in the XII Army Corps

(46) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 138 and p. 152-153.

(47) A.U.S.E., folder 1506: "Activity report on the battle group Bruni".

(48) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 155.

- 207th Coastal Division 10 July 1943: approach and involvement of units of coverage in the area of use.



of Gen. Mario Arisio to be involved in the initial phase of the Allied invasion.

In the defensive concept of the XII Corps the field of Licata was considered of secondary importance, while there was a tendency to attribute a greater strategic value to the Western most beaches. As a result the western sector of the 207th Coastal Division comprising Agrigento and Port Empedocle was more embellished than the eastern area including Licata, against which instead ended up developing the amphibious assault of the American "Joss." column

However in the early hours of 10 July the port of Licata and in Port Empedocle were also deemed in danger and, as we have seen, Gen. Guzzoni ordered the periods of inactivity to 01:50. The planned demolition work, carried out under the pressure of events and poor staff, however, was not at all satisfactory and left "virtually unscathed all port works", as stated in the report of the 207th Div. of Amalfi ⁽⁴⁹⁾. In addition to this the explosion of a demolition mine misplaced the damaged and blocked the armed train of the Royal Navy placed on one of the piers of the port of Licata, just when it was supposed to keep all operational efficiency ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

As we said, the shock troops of the American 3rd Inf. Div., started landing to 03:00 between Torre di Gaffe and Punta Due Rocche, they overran the weak advanced works of the 207th Coastal Division and entered Licata at dawn. The two 105/27 batteries of CXLV group, only surviving in the invested sector, failed to curb the enemy, while a counter-attack of the 538th coastal Battalion in the direction of Poggio Cuti and Torre di Gaffe was "conducted slackly" and was panned by US armored vehicles ⁽⁵¹⁾.

At 05:07 the command of the XII Corps put at the disposal of Gen. Schreiber tactical group of Ravanusa of Consul Negroni, made-up by Command of the XVII CC.NN. legion, the 259th machine gun company, the XVII CC.NN. Battalion, and by the group I cavalry squadrons "Palermo." Unfortunately the order given immediately to this tactical group by Gen.

(49) A.U.S.E., 2124 / B folder: "Report on the fighting supported by the 207th Coastal Div., 10 to 16 July 1943. p. 3.

(50) *Ibid*, p. 3. It was the armed train 76-II-T.

(51) *Ibid*, p. 6.

Schreiber to move to the S. Oliva station, northwest of Licata, was done "too slowly", so that it did not come into contact with the enemy, it vanished in the retreat directly on Caltanissetta on the initiative of Consul Negroni ⁽⁵²⁾.

At 07:45 the commander of the 207th Coastal Div., informing the commander of the XII Corps. that the enemy penetration at Torre di Gaffe had reached Case Urso and that the cornerstone of Case Sillitti was surrounded, he asked for and received permission to blow the interruption on the Vallone Rio Secco. Also it was made insistent requests for the intervention of Semoventi 90/53 of the X group of Canicattì in antitank function. This last request was forwarded by the Commander of the XII Corps of Gen. Guzzoni at 07:50 and was repeated at 11:00. Not having received any reply in this regard, at 11:15 Gen. Schreiber again asked for the intervention of the Semoventi 90/53, which in fact appeared to be the only way to stop the American tanks that from Torre di Gaffe headed toward Case Sillitti and Palma Montcchiaro. Therefore at 11:40 the XII Corps Command asked for the third time to Gen. Guzzoni least one self-propelled unit, which was finally granted and made available to the 207th Coastal Division ⁽⁵³⁾.

Consequently, while Gen. Schreiber addressed to Palma di Montechiaro a platoon of his 1st motorized machine gun company, Col. Bedoya, commander of the 10th artillery group, received the order to send the eight Semoventi 90/53 from the CLXI group from Canicattì to Favarotta station.

At 12:15 the commander of the XII Corps granted to 207th Coastal Div. also a group of the XXII battery 105/28 located in Chiusa Sclafani, by starting to Aragona, and the Command of 177th Bersaglieri Regt. of Col. Venturi and DXXVI Bersaglieri Battalion. stationed at Aragona, transported on trucks to Canicattì, would have joined the advance on Favarotta station part of the CLXI Semoventi unit (54).

However, the delay in deciding the employment of the latter unit as part of the 207th Coastal Div. meant that the American infantry

(52) *Ibid*, p. 6. See. Also E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op.cit., page 117.

(53) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", day 10 July 1943, p. 5-6.

(54) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder, Annexes 12 and 13.

occupied for the first important point of Favarotta station, so that the enemy advanced elements made contact at 16:00 between Case Musta and the same village of Favarotta. It was therefore decided to concentrate the defense line further north, around Campobello di Licata, where were deployed the Command of the 177th Bersaglieri Regiment, who with Col. Venturi took over the entire device, the DXXVI Bersaglieri Battalion and CLXI Semoventi group, supported by the rest of the 1st Motorized Machine gun Company.

However found deficiency in artillery and antitank means towards advancing American armored columns, before 19:00 the commander of the XII Corps puts at the disposal of the 207th Coastal Div. all of the XXII 105/28 group, as well as two battalions (the XXXV and LXXIII) of the 10th Bersaglieri regiment of the Lt. Col. Storti, along with the 12th battery of the CIII 75/27 art. group. The order was to counterattack at dawn of 11 July in the Licata area through three guiding passes Campobello di Licata, Naro and Palma Montechiaro, while further east the XVI Corps would develop a concurrent counter-offensive on Gela ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

8. THE IMMEDIATE MEASURES OF THE COMMAND OF THE ARMY CORPS AND COMMAND OF THE ARMY AND SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION ON THE EVENING OF 10 JULY XVI ARMY CORPS

At the time of the invasion the XVI Corps of Gen. Carlo Rossi no longer had in his employ the "*Livorno*" Inf. Div., which past to the Army reserve, and therefore had, in addition to the troops of the Corps and reinforcement and coastal units in appendix n. 8, of the only two mobile divisions "*Napoli*" and "*H. Goering*."

In particular the core of the "H. Goering" was deployed around Caltagirone, while the battle group "Schmalz" was stationed in Paterno. The "Napoli" Inf. Div. was instead split into six battle groups, oriented towards the plain of Catania and from the Fortified town of Augusta-Syracuse ⁽⁵⁶⁾. It had the following tactical groups:

(55) *Ibid*, Annex 16.

(56) From the "Report on operations in this sector of the XVI Corps from day 10 to day 20 July 1943 in A.U.S.E., folder 1427.

- Rarnacca, with I/76th Inf. and CX art. group of 149/13;
- Carlentini, with II/76th Inf. and 3rd bty. CXXVI art. group of 75/27;
- Scordia, With III/76th Inf., the II/54th Art. and an antitank company of 47/32;
- Canicattini Bagni, with I/75th Inf. and the CXXVI art. group command with the first bty. 75/27;
- Palazzolo Acreide, with the II/75th Inf. and two anti-tank companies of 47/32;
- Buccheri, with III/75th Inf. and the XVI art. group of 105/28. In addition, the XVI Corps received by Gen. Guzzoni the early hours of July 10 also the Group III of the 28th Art. Regiment and the entire 33rd Inf. Regiment of the division "*Livorno*", that General Rossi, as we have seen, assigned for use by the XVIII Coastal Brigade.

Been reports of launches of paratroopers in Case Priolo, Stretta di Corallo, Marina di Ragusa and the airport of S. Pietro and landing from the sea at Senia Ferrata, at 03.15 of July 10, as we know, the Commander of the XVI Corps ordered the German "*H. Goering*" division to fight back on this last resort. Within forty-five minutes they had also already illustrated the ordinary movements of the mobile groups 'E' and 'H', of the III/33rd Inf. and III/28th Art., as well as movement of the CIX Art. Group of 149/13 of the Corps to Passo Piazza, between Piazza Armerina and Gela.

At 04:45 Gen. Rossi was informed by telephone by Gen. Guzzoni of scarce and confused reports on the events around the Augusta-Siracusa Naval base, which will be discussed extensively later. He then immediately ordered the "Napoli" Div. to put the I/75th Inf. of Maj. Guzzardi and 1st bty. Of the CXXVI Art. group of 75/27 allocated in Canicattini Bagni available to the Commandr of the above Naval base. ⁽⁵⁷⁾. Two hours later the same division commander of the "Napoli" received in reinforcement the XVI Art. group of 105/28 of the Corps., transferred from Buccheri in Palazzolo Acreide ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

We already know the negative outcome of the counter-attack of the III/33rd Inf. of the "Livorno" to Monte Poggio Lungo, the mobile unit

(57) A. U.S.E., folder 1427: "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps., The orders of the Command XVI C.A. n. 01/8156/op of 04:45 hours of July 10, 1943.

(58) *Ibid*, dispatch from the Command of the XVI C.A. n. 01/8158/op.

"E" of Niscemi at the crossroads of the Gela plain and two columns of the "*H. Goering*" Div. of Gen. Conrath at Case Priolo and along the Dirillo valley (see. Maps n. 12 & 13).

We must remember that at 08:10 on July 10 that Gen. Rossi, increasingly worried by the events in the southern sector of the Augusta-Siracusa Naval base, he asked Gen. Conrath about the possibility of diverting his left column to the latter locations, as well as to further reinforce the defense, but the commander of the "*H. Goering*" said it could not detract nothing from its columns marching towards the beaches of Gela and the commander of the XVI Corps agreed fully at 08:50 on the need to liquidate as soon as the enemy landed in the latter sector ⁽⁵⁹⁾. In support of the Fortified town of Augusta -Siracusa, as we shall see, the Germans sent instead their "Schmalz" group.

Although concerned about the fate of the latter Fortified town, Gen. Rossi and Gen. Guzzoni could not, however, certainly neglect the areas directly affected by the sea, especially after being informed that "hundreds of ships at anchor, absolutely undisturbed by aviation and the navy, continued to land men, equipment and large quantities of materials" ⁽⁶⁰⁾.

At 13:45 on 10 July Gen. Guzzoni therefore again he puts at the disposal of the XVI Corps the entire "Livorno" Inf. Div., with which he had to be carried out pending counter-offensive of Gela coordinated with the "*H. Goering*", which will be discussed in chapter VIII.

XII ARMEY CORPS

The only sector of the American landing that affected the XII Corps of Gen. Arisio was at Licata, invested by the "Joss" column. At that time Gen. Arisio, who had the seat of his command in Corleone, possession of coastal troops, reinforcement units and a contingent of Corps troops, see"

(59) *Ibid*, Diary, pp. 29-30, "Report on the operations carried out in the XVI Corps field from day 10 to day 20 July 1943," pp. 4-5

(60) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Report on the operations in this sector of the XVI Corps from day 10 to day 20 July 1943", p. 5

Appendix no. 8 in the appendixes, as well as the two Inf. Div. "Aosta" and "Assietta" and the German "Ens" battle group. These mobile forces, however, were located at the western end of the island, roughly between Castellammare and the lower reaches of Belize, and were therefore not immediately available to help repel enemy landing on the distant southern beaches of Licata. The American invasion in this area was initially opposed then by only the 207th Coastal Div of Gen. Schreiber, as we have already shown.

After Licata had been occupied by the Rangers and the II/15th Regiment of the American 3rd Inf. Div. at first light, the command of the XII Corps, as we have seen, had made available the 207th Coastal Div., for known attempts at counter-offensive around Campobello di Licata, the tactical group of Ravranusa, the eight 90/53 Semoventi of the CLXI Group, a 105/28 battery of the XXII Art. group and the Command of the 177th Bersaglieri Regiment with the DXXVI battalion. Finally at 19:00 Gen. Arisio put at the disposal of Gen. Schreiber whole XXII 105/28 Art. group, and two battalions of the 10th Bersaglieri Regiment of Lt. Col. Stoni (the XXXV and LXXIII) along with the 12th bty. Of the CIII 75/27 Art. group (See. map n. 15).

Meanwhile it was inserted in the western tip of Sicily, and specifically in the field of Marsala, the new Command of the 230th Coastal Div., which superseded the 208th Coastal Div. in the area between Torre S. Teodoro and the mouth of the Arena river ⁽⁶¹⁾.

In order not to leave unprotected the road junction of Chiusa Sclafani, from where they had been taken from the XXII Art. Group and the two battalions of the 10th Bersaglieri Regiment with the 12th 75/27 bty., Gen. Arisio ordered at 19:15 to the Command of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. transferred by vehicles from S. Ninfa to the area of the III Battalion of the 30th Inf. Regt. and the CCXXXIII Art. Group of the "Centauro" of 75/27, from the XII Corps Command was also always refused and sent to Chiusa Sclafani the XIX Art. group "Centauro" of 105/28.

Finally at 22:45 Gen. Arisio requested and received permission from Gen. Guzzoni authorization to order the setting off of the prepared demolitions in the ports of Mazara del Vallo, Marsala and Sciacca, following a hasty reporting of an enemy convoy

(61) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 11, telex No. 1/9604 / op of 10 July 1943.

directed on those beaches, which instead remained excluded from the Allied Maritime invasion ⁽⁶²⁾. The three demolitions were carried out respectively at 01:40, at 03:15 and at 05:30 on 11 July ⁽⁶³⁾.

At the end of the first day of fighting the Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps considered the physical and moral conditions of the depend troops “*good except for elements of the Sicilian coastal battalions, MACA and Milmart batteries, which show poor moral steadfastness and moved away from the units*”⁽⁶⁴⁾.

COMMAND OF THE 6th ARMY

Unable to cope with the enemy landing anywhere, which is revealed in ample proportions and extremely widespread, Gen. Guzzoni, Commander of the Armed Forces Sicily and the 6th Army on the island, decided to concentrate the reaction of the available mobile forces against the beachheads of Licata and Gela and against the south of Augusta - Siracusa (see. map n. 16).

In particular, to address the possible American penetration along the Salso valley from Licata, where, however, was expected to be a counteroffensive on the 11th departing from Campo bello di Licata, Gen. Guzzoni ordered at 14:30 of the 10th the XII Corps to move toward the east and the German "Ens" battle group, which was then between Salemi and S. Ninfa, as well as reunite with the rest of the 15th "Sizilien" Division in the area of S. Cataldo, Caltanissetta, reporting directly to the Armed Forces Sicily Command⁽⁶⁵⁾. This transfer, however, was not completed until July 12 and for some tank units, the following day ⁽⁶⁶⁾.

During the night of the 10th he also ordered to XII Corps to arrange the movements of the divisions “*Aosta*” and “*Assietta*” in view of an alleged landing in western Sicily, a superfluous forethought and overtaken by events ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

(62) *Ibid*, attachments 18, 19 and 20.

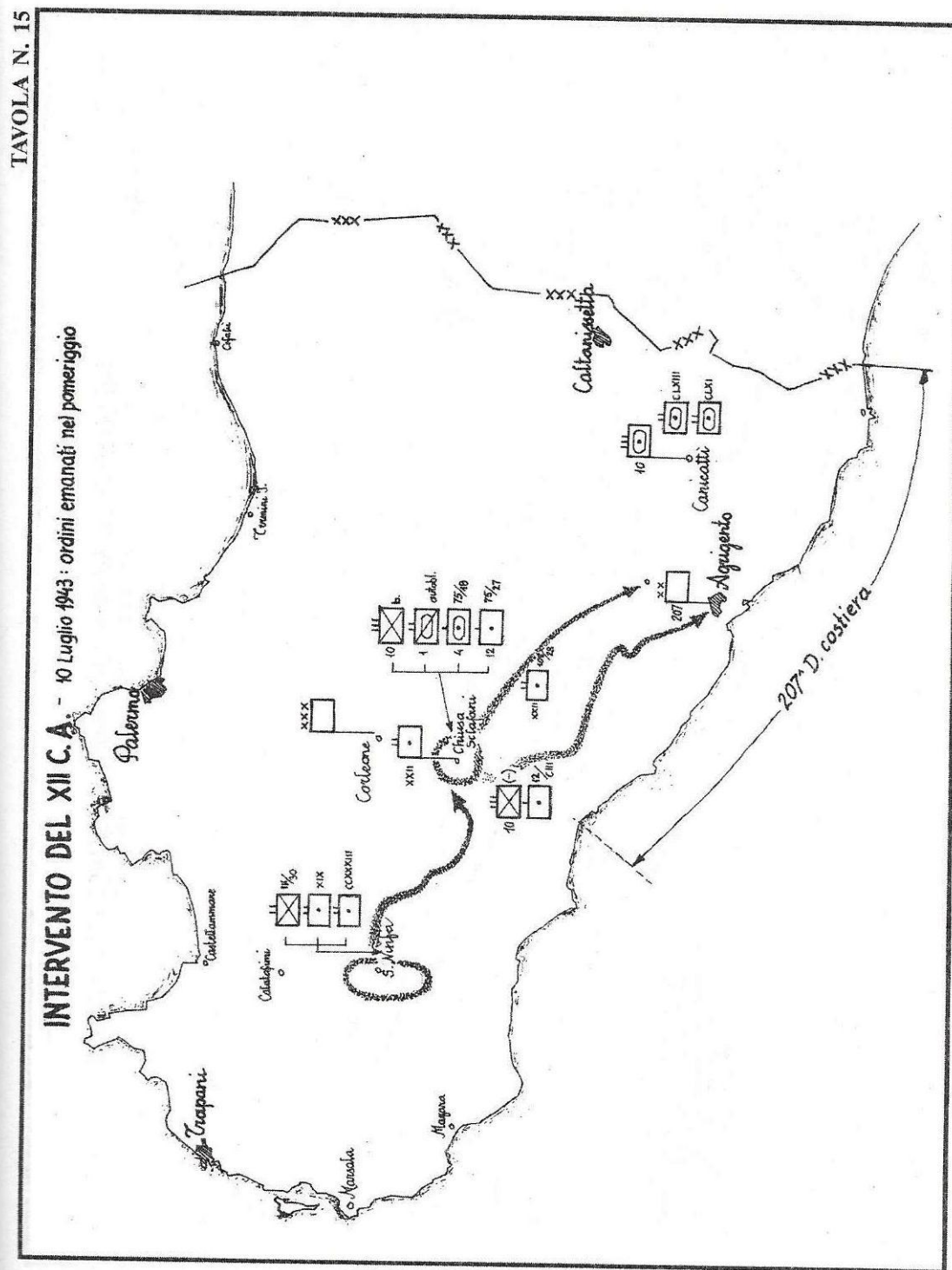
(63) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", The day July 11, 1943, p. 13.

(64) *Ibid*, day 10 July 1943, p. 11-12.

(65) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder, Annex 15: telex of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16329 / op of 14:30 hours of July 10, 1943.

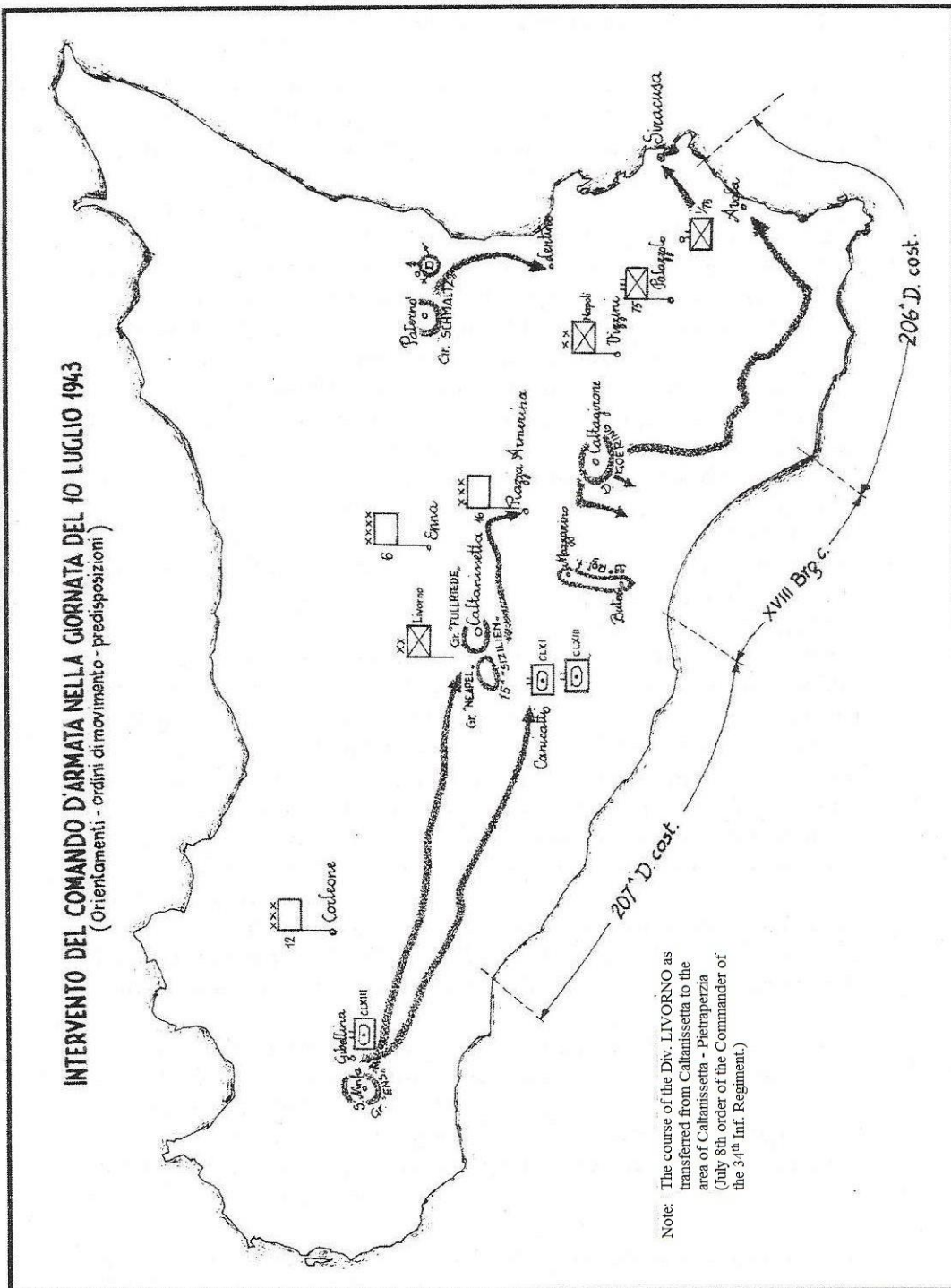
(66) A.U.S.E., 2124 / B folder: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily" from 15 June to 20 July 1943, p. 20.

(67) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder, attachment 22: report of the Command XII C.A. n. 1/9696/op of 24.00 on July 10, 1943.



INTERVENTION OF THE COMMAND OF THE ARMY DAY 10 July 1943
(Guidelines - movement orders - dispositions)

TAVOLA N. 16



In defense of the Gela sector, however, Gen. Guzzoni proposed at 10:00 a counteroffensive by the "*H. Goering*" Div., which, moreover, as we know, had already been ordered by Gen. Rossi at 03.15 and was attempted without success throughout the afternoon of the 10th (68).

Then at 13:45 the command of the Armed Forces of Sicily ordered that the entire "*Livorno*" division, passed to the employ of the XVI Corps, thus reuniting the 33rd Regiment. It was attributed to Gen. Rossi in the early hours of the day. Thus it was to form a powerful force, one oriented on Gela and consists of the "*Livorno*" and by "*H. Goering* ", that the next day would unleash more decisive counter-offensive from the Sicilian countryside.

The biggest concerns were, however, as we have said, and as we shall see in the next chapter, the rapidly deteriorating situation in the south of the Naval Base of Augusta - Siracusa, whose reinforcing the XVI Army Corps had already sent at 04:45 of the I/75th Inf. of Maj. Guzzardi and a battery of 75/27 from Canicattini Bagni.

Is reserved for to detailed examining of the events and the subsequent countermeasures taken in the sensitive area of Augusta -Siracusa, we can already list the main provisions issued in this regard by the Armed Forces Command of Sicily. At 08:00 on 10 July, in a long telephone conversation between General Guzzoni and Rossi, it was agreed to organize a counter-offensive in the direction of Syracuse led by Gen. Gatti Porcinari, commander of the "*Napoli*" Inf. Div., and prepare the way to the following movements:

- deployment of the 76th Inf. Regiment of the "*Napoli*" on the Scordia - Brucoli line, facing south;

- deployment from Palazzolo Acreide on the direction of Solarino - Floridia - Syracuse of the II/75th Inf. of the "*Napoli*" of Col. Ronco, reinforced by X Art. Group. Of 105/28 from the 40th Regimental Group of Corps Art.;

- transfer of III/75th Inf. from Buccheri to Palazzolo Acreide-Solarino area under the command of Gen. Fiumara, second in command of the "*Napoli*";

- deployment mobile group 'D' of Misterbianco, commanded by Lt. Col. D 'Andretta, along the Carlentini - Sortino road, up to Solarino;

(68) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", day 10 July 1943, p. 17 and p. 23-24.

- Employment of the German "Schmalz" group stationed in Paternò in the direction - Siracusa Augusta ⁽⁶⁹⁾.

On this last point at 13:50, it was ordered to the "Schmalz" group to execute the approach to the Melilli area and that unit moves from Paternò with its two infantry battalions of the 115th Regiment, the tank battalion, the artillery group and the armored recon units.

As it is known, at 08:10 Command of the XVI Corps inquired of Gen. Conrath also on the possibility of diverting for Syracuse at the left column of the "H. Goering" marching towards Gela, a proposal which was rejected by the commander of the German division due to the opportunities - then recognized as needed by the Gen. Rossi at 08:50 - to divert and deflect so far German armor forces intended for counter-offensive of Gela.

At 17:45 Gen. Guzzoni made known to the G.S.R.E. his appreciation of the military situation with the following optimistic message ⁽⁷⁰⁾.

"XII Corps area.

Paratroopers landed in the Castelvetro area annihilated.

To the west and north of Licata infiltration of mechanized units contained on the - Campobello - Licata line.

XVI Corps area

Continue massive landings area of 10 km, west and south Licata Vittoria 160 steamers with numerous landing craft.

Division "Goering" continues its action on Gela while the "Livorno" division is alongside to the right to act against the same target.

Coastal troops resisting heroically in south cornerstones Modica, Pachino Peninsula & Noto area - Avola, although strong masses of infantry and tanks move ahead from the coast.

Ground Defense across Siracusa resists the course of the Anapo and "Napoli" division rushes to secure possession of the Base.

Paratroopers launched on the S. Pietro airport and most other places are encircled or eliminated,

Faced with preponderance of enemy forces in constant rapid increase, all the troops go against strong resistance. Batteries overcome continue shooting & defend themselves to the knife.

To cope with the situation, in addition to employing division "Livorno" in co-operation with the "Goering" Division, I ordered that the "Sizilien" division to the

(69) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", day 10 July 1943, p. 28-29.

(70). A.U.S.E., 2228 folder: "Diary of the 6th Army Military History", telex the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16336 of 17:45 hours of July 10, 1943.

Salemi area moves to the next fleet at least largely in the area east & Southeast of Enna. The rest will follow next night,

It is increasingly urgent- but ssiccio use the Aeronautica against ships & landing bases & send reinforcements especially antitank means. General Guzzoni ".

Unfortunately, the military situation was already more serious than that represented by Guzzoni with that meeting at the G.S.R.E. of 17:45 and in the evening of 10 July, the first day of fighting, it could be summarized as follows.

In the area of the XIII Corps of the British Army 5th Inf. Div., as we shall see later, occupied Syracuse at 21:00 with its 17th Brigade, and the 13th Brigade had arrived in Floridia facing the rush from the west of the tactical group of Canicattini Bagni and Col. Ronco belonging to "Napoli" Inf. Div column.

In the same area the English 50th Inf. Div. occupied Avola and Canicattini Bagni reached with the avant-garde, while the 231st Brigade "Malta" entered Noto.

In the British XXX Corps area it was occupied by the Scots of the 51st Inf. Div. the Pachino peninsula and infiltration into Rosolini - Ispica area were made by the Canadian 1st Inf. Div.

In the intermediate zone between the British and American areas, not directly attacked straight from the sea and by the 123rd Coastal Regiment and by the right wing of the 122nd Coastal Regiment, were still close to the beaches the 375th, 381st and 383rd battalions, the latter, however, was bypassed on the right side by the American 45th Inf. Div. in S. Croce Camerina and still clinging to the stronghold of Cozzo Cappello. Further inland, however, the U.S.A. III/179th Inf. of the 45th Division had seized Vittoria and American paratroopers fought around Comiso and Modica.

In the American 1st Inf. Div sector in front of Gela the German "*H. Goering*" Division was unnecessarily thrown in counterattack in the afternoon and was about to a renew the counter-offensive in the morning along with the "Livorno" division, which had also already tested the enemy forces with the III/33rd infantry. For their part, the remains of the XVIII Coastal Brigade and mobile group "E" of Niscemi, proven by the morning fighting at the level crossing of Gela, still held their positions around Monte Castelluccio and Ponte Olivo airport, while the

mobile unit "H" faced enemy paratroopers in front of the airport of S. Pietro.

In the Licata area the American 3rd Inf. Div. had reached the line of Palma Montechiaro of Favarotta station, while he was preparing an Italian counteroffensive, departing from Campobello di Licata, with the use of a variety of formations of the XII Corps gathered under the command of Gen. Francisci made available by the Commander of the 6th Army of Gen. Guzzoni.

The approach of the planned counter attacks in Licata, Gela and Augusta - Syracuse caused the Armed Forces Command of Sicily to intervene again to urge a more intense national air and naval assistance. Gen. Guzzoni of that fact at 19:45 on July 10 addressed in that regard a further appeal to the G.S. of the Army, stressing that "*the initial successes of the enemy, increased significantly during the day, despite the stubborn resistance, had been made possible by the powerful assistance given to terrestrial operations by naval and air forces acting incessantly in freedom for the total absence of ours*" ⁽⁷¹⁾.

We shall see later that while lasted the absence of all our naval contrast, the Italian - German air forces took part to some extent to the operations of the day 11.

(71) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Command FF.AA of Sicily" from 15 June to 20 July 1943, p. 20.

CHAPTER VII

INVESTMENT OF THE FORTIFIED TOWN OF AUGUSTA – SYRACUSE

1. DEFENSES (See map n. 17)

The Naval Base of Augusta - Syracuse depended on Supermarina through the Independent Military Command of the Navy of Sicily of Admiral Pietro Barone.

The commander of the fort was the Commodore Priam Leonardi, under whose direct employ were by a battalion of sailors, airmen and a battalion 121st Coastal Inf. Regiment of. Col. Francis Darniano, formed by 246th, 385th, the 504th and the 540th Battalion, by the 80th 76/42 battery, five anti-parachutist units and five armed gun posts with pieces of 149/13.

The fixed defenses belonged to the 7th Milmar legion of Consul De Pasquale and included six anti-ship coastal battery of large and medium caliber and two armed pontoons (for a total of two guns from 381/40 at Capo S. Panagia, two 203/50 Capo S. Croce, two 190/45, two 149/43 and twelve 152/53), eleven batteries dual role anti-ship and anti-aircraft for a total of forty-two pieces from 102/35 and thirty 76/40 and six anti-aircraft batteries with another thirty-six pieces 76/40. finally, there were the Navy's armed train 102-I- T stop at Targia station with six pieces of 102/35, machine gun for close defense, four 40 / 39 A/A guns and thirty 13.2 mm A/A guns.

The territory of the fort, which bordered on the north by the field of the 213th Coastal Div. and south with that of 206th Coastal Div, stretching from Cozzo dei Turchi to Masseria Palma near Punta Milocca for a maritime front of 75 kilometers and a real coastline of 91 kilometers. Its depth ranged from 13 to 5

kilometers, while the perimeter of the land front - behind which were allocated the German "Schmalz" group and "Napoli" Inf. Div. - ran for 52 km, passing just south of Villasmundo, Monte Buongiovanni - along the ridge of the Monti Climiti; for Belvedere and Masseria Bagni.

The four coastal battalions, the 385th covered the front of the sea including Syracuse, between the southern tip of the fort and Priolo Gargallo, and 246th the remaining maritime sector including Augusta. On the land front it was instead deployed to the north the 504th Battalion. to the height of Melilli and south with the 540th Battalion which together had formed thirty-strong points and the five checkpoints in cement works, not all but complete the due accessories accommodation and camouflage. The 80th Battery of the Army was stationed near Masseria Scatà the hinterland of the Magdalene peninsula. Only five anti-tank guns, of the 185 promised, had arrived in the fort, but still lacked the pointing devices,

The headquarters Adm. Leonardi was placed at Crotte di Melilli, in the unfortunate position because it was not possible to observe the area of the fort, visible on the other hand completely from the center of the village of Melilli.

The entire defensive organization was considered "sufficient" in a report issued on June 25, 1943 by Capt. Alberto Scalori, who performed in the fort special reconnaissance. That report also called it "good in general the arrangement of strongpoints", "remarkable armored works" and "the good morale of the soldiers" ⁽¹⁾. Yet the very same June 25 the commander of the Fortified town, Adm. Leonardi, had asked Gen. Guzzoni an increase of the forces at his disposal,

Status day efficiency of the coastal defense of the fort spoke July 7 with positive accents the same Guzzoni ⁽²⁾. According to the Commander of the Armed Forces in Sicily would, however, been necessary to improve the equipment of the strong points, and their masking, however, considering that "the deficiencies complained about the arrangement of the ammunition stores, depots and services and about the

(1) A.U.S.E 2221 folder: "Historical Military Diary of the 6th Army, from March to June 1943", annexed 33.1.

(2) A.U.S.E 2228 folder, reminders of the Command FF.AA of Sicily n. 15665/op of July 7, 1943.

deployment of artillery, when not due to force majeure, they are due, at an odd defensive concepts of previous Naval commands" ⁽³⁾.

However as promised to the fort Commander Gen. Guzzoni addressed the following day at the IRMS a request for work tools and two artisans for companies "transformation into robust strong points" of the three peninsulas of Monte Tauro, S. Panagia and Maddalena , creating stations in the caves⁽⁴⁾.

Underestimated at the time was instead the links deficiency. If it could be considered good the telephone network, and radio telegraph between the upper commands; - they were not in place instead of the radio links between the battalion commands and the fort Command for lack of frequency indexes, repeatedly requested.

2. THE ENGLISH INVASION AND THE FIRST DISCUSSED MEASURES (See map n. 17)

From the evidence gathered in the course of the famous Trizzino process, namely by deposition released by the commander of the fort, Adm. Leonardi, and the commander of the 7th Legion Milmar, Consul De Pasquale, it shows that at around 20:00 on 9 July, that is, two and a half hours before the invasion from heaven and six hours before landing from the sea of the British *Commandos*, the Chief of Staff of Adm. Leonardi, Commander Gasparrini, recommended to the Senior* Calogero Sapio, second in command of the 7th legion the "preparing for the destruction of the batteries" ⁽⁵⁾.

The content of this unexpected call was reportedly straight away to the Consul De Pasquale, who rightly did not take the time to consider, considering it untimely and dangerous for the moral steadfastness of the defenders.

(3) *Ibid.* Remember that the Commodore Leonardi had succeeded on June 8, 1943 Adm. Luigi Notarbartolo in command of Augusta-Siracusa Naval Base. New Chief of the G.S. of the Admiral became the Commander Luigi Gasparrini.

(4) A.U.S.E 2228 folder, dispatch Command FF.AA of Sicily. n. 16122 / Op 8 July 1943.

(5) The Court of Milan, on the trial Trizzirto of November 20, 1953, also reported by G. Zingali: *L'invasione della Sicilia* op. cit. p. 148-149.

*Militia rank equivalent to a Major

An hour later started at Syracuse and the mouth of the Anapo a violent bombardment by fifty-five British twin-engine "*Wellington*" that caused by the way the death of Commander Gianotti, commander of the local naval base. So at 22:00 it came in the hands of the Consul De Pasquale a phonogram of Adm. Leonardi with which definitely confirmed the order to prepare destruction and reminded strongly that sector commanders would be held responsible for the proper fulfillment ⁽⁶⁾.

Only half an hour after this additional capture of the position the fort command were the first of the signs of the enemy invasion. In fact, at 22:30 they began to be reported in the territory of the Fortified town, increasingly so suspect, presumed downing of daytime raider aircraft, which instead were nothing more than gliders with the British paratroopers. Shortly after the battery "Luigi di Savoia" signaled the capture of some English, including a chaplain.

We already know the respect that 73 of these paratroopers seized around midnight at the mouth of the Great Bridge of Anapo, preventing the prepared demolition charges were detonated and defending it until the afternoon of the 10th the II Battalion of the 17th Infantry Brigade. Other raiders however managed to cut many telephone lines of Italian commands, helping to originate the next disorder defensive organization.

Following the receipt of the said order Adm. Leonardi wrote at 22:00 to the commander of the 7th Legion Milmar did draw some excerpts of an old plan for the destruction of the emplacements, which were then delivered to the individual batteries between 05:00 and 06:00 on 10 July, the first locally engendering confusion much feared by Consul De Pasquale himself.

The latter, for his part, did not keep with the Fort Command the necessary connections and then admitted he had tried the telephone contact with the same command before 18:30 ⁽⁷⁾.

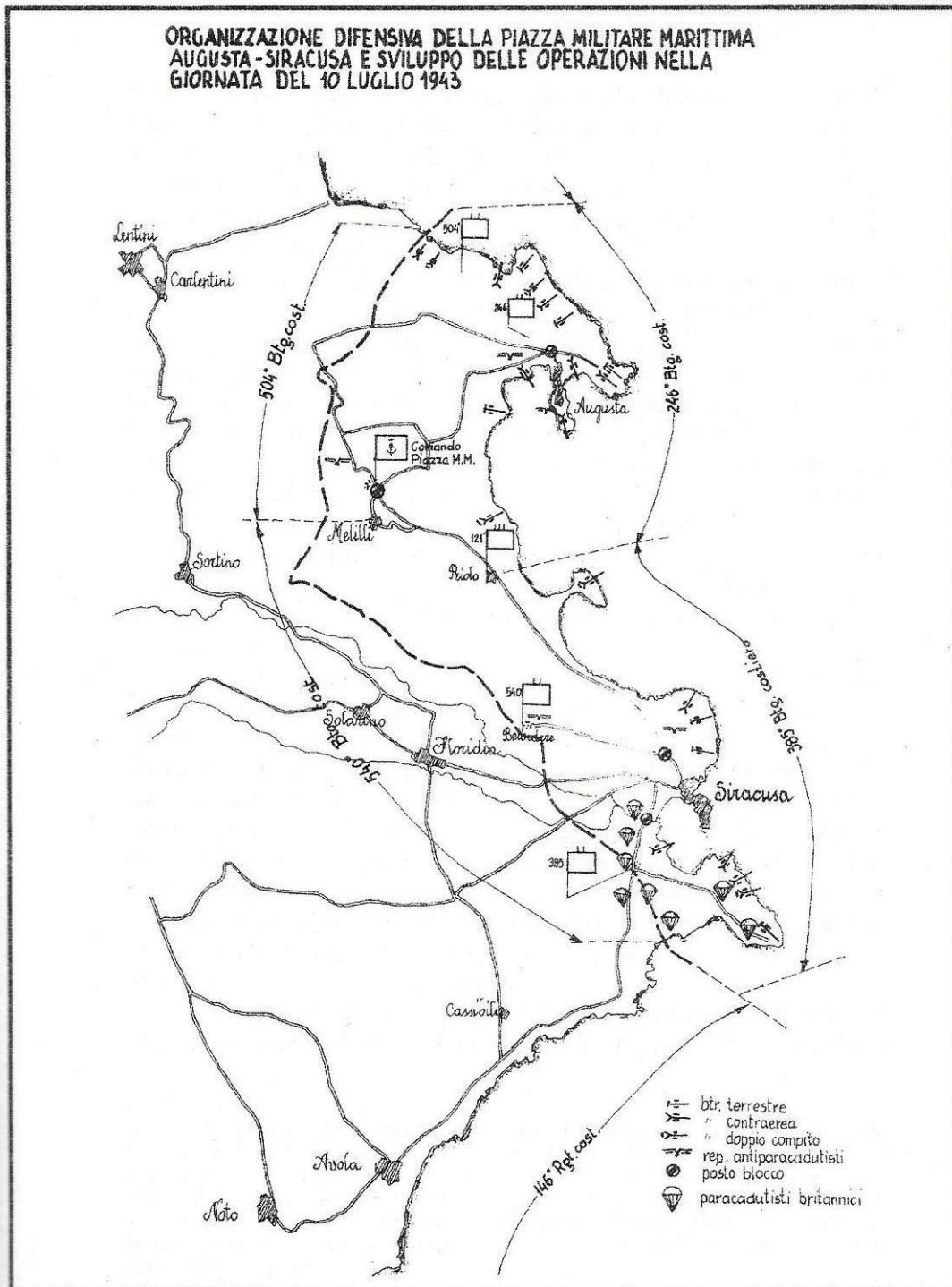
The landing from the sea of the English 3rd *Commando* of Col. Slater and two S.A.S. units of Maj. Mayne took place, as is known, to

(6) See. E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 127; T. MARCON: *Augusta 1940-43*, Rome 1980, p. 117; S. ATTANASIO: *Sicilia senza Italia, luglio-agosto 1943*, op. cit., p. 104.

(7) Deposition De Pasquale at the Milan Court, hearing of 23 November 1953.

DEFENSIVE ORGANIAZION OF NAVY BASES AUGUSTA - SYRACUSE AND
DEVELOPMENT OF OPERATIONS IN THE GIORNATA OF July 10, 1943

TAVOLA N. 17



02:10 of 10 July in the peninsula Magdalene and yielded, by dawn the capture of four batteries "Doria Lambda", "Emmanuel Russo", "AS 365" and "AS 493"⁽⁸⁾. Then the first waves at 03:45 they landed farther south, between Punta Giorgi and Capo Ognina, the first waves of the British 15th and the 17th Brigade belonging to the 5th Inf. Div. of Gen. Berney-Ficklin.

The fatal orders to sabotage the stations thus came to the units almost simultaneously with the first findings of an invasion on a large scale from the sky and from the sea and the English early successes against the coastal strongholds and the four mentioned batteries. Consequently the initial loss swelled and gave rise to more substantial phenomena of mass desertion among the ranks of soldiers sailors and airmen of which there are unfortunately numerous documentary confirmations. Also the fact that the German 3rd motor torpedo boats flotilla pulled away in the morning of the 10th from Augusta, having destroyed its deposits, seemed to confirm many of the imminence of a collapse of the entire Fortified town, but that in that time was not even threatened by the still distant British 5th division.

At 11:00, after another air strike on Augusta, Commander Turchi, commander of the local naval base, requested and obtained by Adm. Leonardi permission to withdraw from the city together with the personnel of the Subsistence and anti-landing unit of Capt. CREM Arena. The sight of this other untimely retreat in the units were determined to Augusta certain that you were in the presence of a general retreat not notified at all because of the ascertained interruption of numerous telephone connections. And so the heel increased and multiplied as a result of consequential local initiatives, while against the now unguarded warehouses of Subsistence broke into looting⁽⁹⁾.

An attempt be aware of the confusing situation in the sensitive area of the Great Bridge had meanwhile induced dawn

(8) A British firm protagonist, Lt. D.J. Harrison, wrote: "We were landed in less than three hundred and one morning we had captured three batteries (which were four, author's note) and completely raked the Capo Murra di Porco, with a loss to the enemy than seven hundred men in killed, wounded and prisoners. Moreover, the enemy had lost eighteen heavy guns and machine guns countless, mortars, rifles and rangefinders. We had lost a bottle and two caps. See. D.J. HARRISON: *Uomini pericolosi*, Milano 1960. p. 64.

(9) T. MARCON: *Augusta 1940-43*, op. cit., p. 125-126.

Adm. Leonardi to order Col. Crescione, liaison officer with the Armed Forces Command of Sicily, a survey on the spot. In fact this morning that senior officer met at the Great Bridge with Lt. Col. Aliotta, commander of the 385th Coastal Battalion and temporary commander of the entire 121st Coastal Regiment for the temporary absence of Col. Damian, handing him two hundred sailors as reinforcement for the reconquest of the important viaduct.

Then at 13:30 the same Adm. Leonardi, that an hour and a half had been informed of sending reinforcements to the Fortified town pertaining to the rear "Napoli" Inf. Div., he went in person near the Great Bridge, ordering the Lt. Col. Aliotta to fight to the bitter end. Immediately after the departure of the Admiral, however, the 385th Battalion and the reinforcement of sailors fell back toward the ridge of the Belvedere.

3. THE COUNTER ATTACK OF TACTICAL GROUP CANICATTINI BAGNI (See map n. 18)

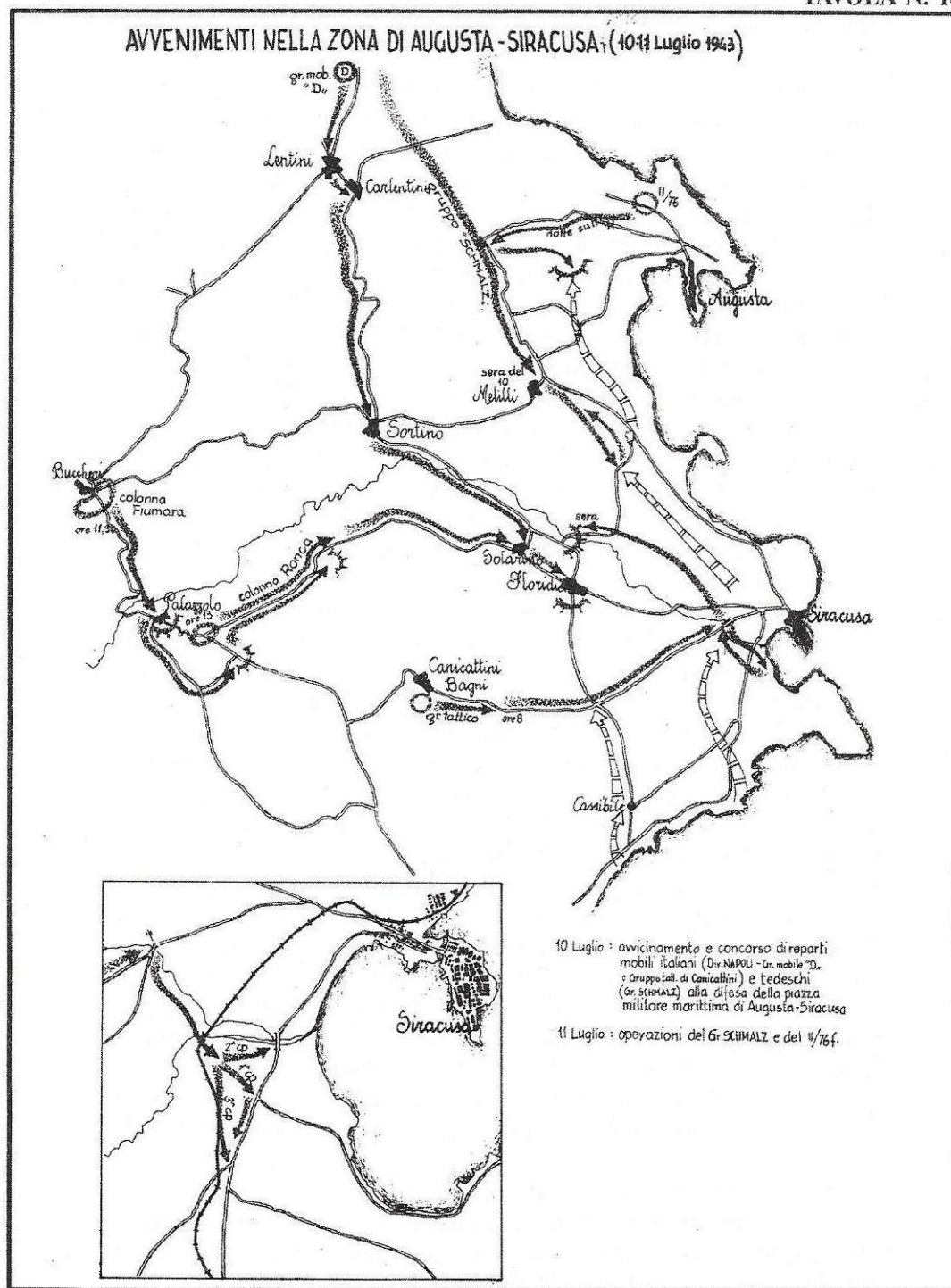
As we have repeatedly said, the first Army unit the XVI Corps put available to the Commander of the Augusta -Siracusa Naval base (04:45 hours of July 10th) was the so-called tactical group of Canicattini Bagni, which under the command of Maj. Guzzardi met the I/75th Inf. "Napoli" partially lorry (22 vehicles), the 2nd cyclists company and the 1st 75/27 battery with mechanical towing of the CXXVI art. group of Maj. Paoli ⁽¹⁰⁾.

At 06.00 the place of observation Cugno Lupo had communicated to Maj. Guzzardi they had spotted enemy shipping and barrage balloons in the direction along the coast of Cassibile and half an hour after a motorcyclist came the request of the Command of the 146th Coast Regiment for a requested counter attack right on Cassibile, whose village had been attacked by troops of the English 5th Inf. Div. ⁽¹¹⁾.

At 07:30 the battle group began to move from Canicattini Bagni with 550 truck carried infantry, followed by another 200

(10) A.U.S.E folder 1427: "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps" dispatch n. 01/8156/op cited.

(11) A.U.S.E folder 1427, attached 59/3, "Report on the use of tactical unit of Canicattini Bagni of 75th Inf., 9 to 11 July 1943".



men on foot and preceded by 95 cyclists of the 2nd company. However this combat unit did not arrive in Cassibile, since at 08:00, when it had covered 1.7 kilometers and was located at the crossroads for this location, it was joined by a hand-order of Adm. Leonardi that according to the new dependency, instructed him to direct on the Maddalena peninsula there neutralize reported by British paratroopers unit.

Maj. Guzzardi therefore quickly reached the Stone Bridge on the way to Syracuse, from which swerved on Bridge Tre Braccia, where at 09:15 the first enemy contingents were met, and where the battle group was divided into the following three columns: 2nd company to the left the with the goal the Great bridge, the 1st company in the center towards Dromo Carrozziere and the 3rd company to the right towards the junction at km. 4 of the roadway for Syracuse. At Stone Bridge instead stayed the 75/27 battery in place.

Following the first battles they were rounded up and captured 160 British paratroopers and reached the locations listed above. At the checkpoint at km. 4 of the roadway were met some Italian coastal units that still resisted and whose help Maj. Guzzardi launched at 11:30 the 1st company being deflected from Dromo Carrozziere. Half an hour later, however, the British armored and infantry belonging to the 17th Brigade attacked and overran the checkpoint and, resting on the right of twelve tanks, also caused heavy losses to the tactical group.

For its part the battery, 75/27 stationed in Stone Bridge could not support the advanced combat, as long as both remained without connections, is provided that its commander, Maj. Paoli, was caught with the patrol of observation by a group paratrooper and stabbed. The same battery was then hit on the flank at 13:30 other armored units from the British 5th Division, which came from Cassibile occupied and, after trying to retreat by the road for Canicattini Bagni, was surrounded and captured at the junction at km. 11 by paratroopers and tanks. In the final struggle valiantly fell Lt. Guido Signorelli, commander of a battery section, awarded the gold medal in memory.

Between 14:00 and 14:30 the situation of the battle group of Maj. Guzzardi became desperate under the growing pressure of the infantry and armored units of the English and, after briefly resisted at the passage of the stream of Mammaiabica and Ciane, retreated

behind the Anapo. But in this matter, the 1st and the 3rd company were cut off and captured almost completely, while the 2nd company and the Command of the I/75th Inf. managed to break away and reach again the road to Syracuse, east of Stone Bridge. From here the survivors opened the way to Belvedere, where they arrived at 18:00 and where, as we have seen, had already withdrew the remains of the 385th Coastal Battalion.

After consumed their rations, the rest of the battle group of Canicattini Bagni, reduced to 150 soldiers, moved that evening to Diddino Bridge, with the intent to meet the II Battalion of the 75th Inf. Regiment "Napoli" belonging to the so-called Col. Ronco column, which will be discussed below. The meeting took place, and that night Maj. Guzzardi was charged with to take the flanks on the aforementioned bridge, to the left of the II/75th Inf., to guard from direction Belvedere and Floridia, in view of the morning advanced the Ronco column on Syracuse, which the English 17th Brigade had entered at 21:00.

4. THE MANEUVER OF THE RONCO COLUMN AND OTHER UNITS SENT FOR BACKUP TO THE FORT (See map n. 18)

At 18:15 on 9 July, the eve of the invasion, the village of Palazzolo Acreide (10,000 inhabitants) was heavily bombed by a wing of 36 four-engine, which attacked furiously especially against the provisions of the Command of the 75th Inf. Regiment "Napoli", causing 30 deaths and hundreds of wounded among the military. In Palazzolo Acreide Col. Ronco, commander of the regiment, he possessed of only the II Inf. Battalion, as well as the headquarters company, of the sappers co. in the process of formation, the regimental antitank co. and 54th antitank co. of the "Napoli" division, reinforced later by the X Art. Group of 105/28, of the 40th regimental group of the Army Corps.

Following the "imposition of emergency rule" by the Armed Forces Sicily Command (01:10 hours of July 10) and in anticipation of new air strikes, Col. Ronco ordered his troops at 04:00 discontinuation of clean-up work undertaken of rubble and fire suppression and transfer in combat assets into Contrada Corbella, wooded area two kilometers south of Palazzolo Acreide. Here the column was reunited with

10:30, after suffering a massive bombing again, learning the first news of enemy invasion⁽¹²⁾.

At 11:30 Gen. Fiumara, commander of the infantry div. "Napoli", based on orders received from the XVI Corps Command, ordered that the Ronco battle group does not move vehicles to Sonino. Half an hour later, however, this order was replaced by another which provided the trucking directly to Syracuse, that is 44 km from Contrada Corbella. In fact, the column marched on foot at 13:30 on the way to Solarino, Florida, Syracuse and the trucks promised never arrived, since the latter, granted by the Army Command, had moved by mistake in another direction⁽¹³⁾.

The gear arrangement of the Ronco column was the following:

- The advanced guard consisting of two platoons of cyclists, from the accompaniment weapons company and from the 54th divisional antitank company;
- units of the battle group with the remaining companies of the II/75th Inf.; two platoons of the regimental antitank company and the X Art. group of 105/28 of the Corp joined at the last moment;
- rear guard composed of sappers company, by a platoon from the regimental antitank Co. and by a platoon of cyclists.

The move was marred by three afternoon air strikes in places Bibbinello (7 km from Palazzolo Acreide) with bombing and strafing which caused numerous deaths and injuries, the killing and the escape of many pack animals and the destruction of some vehicles and materials. Among other things, the 54th Co. divisional antitank remained with one platoon in full efficiency.

After re-organized, and the column resumed the march at 15:00, meeting going the other way "*unarmed or disordered groups of airmen and sailors fugitives from Sifacusa*" and commandeering "*certain heavy vehicles and two buses, as well fugitives from Syracuse that despite the resistance and pretexts, were initiated by force toward the center column so they could load and carry the first units already reordered*"⁽¹⁴⁾.

Meeting his vanguard in Solarino and intending to push on the same evening of Syracuse, Col. Ronco gave orders to two platoons

(12) A.U.S.E folder 1427, attached 59/2, "Report on the operations carried out by the column commanded by Colonel Ronco between 10 and 13 July 1943 in the march between Palazzolo Acreide and Syracuse: p. 1-2.

(13) *Ibid*, p. 3

(14) *Ibid*, p. 4.

cyclists of the advanced guard to continue certainly for Floridia and led the rest of the unit by car on the same route to realize personally the situation. Except that at 16:00, near the Whirlpool Bridge on Scandurra channel, the vehicle in which the Colonel was traveling was subject repeated bursts of automatic weapons.

Realizing that English vanguard had reached the outskirts of Floridia, Col. Ronco directed that a barrier be raised across the aforesaid bridge, defended by a rifle squad and a machine gun, that another squad that is pushed over the bridge to rake the enemy shooters and finally the cyclists company assembled constituted a similar blocking post at km. 8 on the Florida-Syracuse roadway. The rest of the column was stationed overnight in Solarino.

At 19:30 came to Solarino, putting himself under the command of Col. Ronco, the large mobile unit "D" of Lt. Col. D'Andretta, who by order of the Command XVI Corp had started around noon from Misterbianco and was passed through Lentini, Carlentini and Sonino. It was composed of 3rd co. CI Tank Battalion with 18 R/35, by the 1st co. CIII Anti-tank Battalion with six pieces 47/32, the 2nd motorized machine gun Co. with 18 Breda 8 mm. machine guns, by the 7th motorized Co. of the II/76th Inf. "Napoli", the 10th Battery of 75/18 with mechanical towing of the 54th Art. Regiment, by a battery of the 354th anti-aircraft section with four pieces 20 mm. and two of German duel-purpose artillery sections with a total of eight pieces 88 mm. and eight 20 mm. ⁽¹⁵⁾.

During the night came reinforcements also the aforementioned 150 survivors of the infantry battle group of Canicattini Bagni, then deployed on the Diddino bridge, and two mortars companies of the "Naples" Inf. Div commanded by Lt. Col. Dejan, one of which, however, devoid of the pieces and thus converted into a rifle co..

Meanwhile, always following the notes of telephone agreements between 08:00 General Guzzoni and Rossi and the immediate directives, Gen. Fiumara, commander of the "Napoli" infantry Div., had moved at 11:30 of the 10th from Buccheri with the III/75th Inf. and the XVI Art. group, of 105/28 of the 40th regimental grouping of the Corps., constituting afternoon strongholds south day Palazzolo Acreide, the

(15). A.U.S.E folder 1427, annexed 59/13: "mobile airport defense of Group 'D': report of the feat of arms of the days 10, 11, 12 and 13 July 1943 in the Solarino area."

junction of Torre Iudica and Monte Grosso, to bar respectively from direction Noto, from Canicattini Bagni and Floridia-Solarino ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Also at 13:00 the German column of Col. Schmalz had moved from Paterno in Misterbianco to arrive in the evening at Melilli, within the territory of the Naval Base. Finally in the northern part of the Fort, behind Augusta, they were moved to the afternoon of July 10 from Carlentini to Brucoli and then in the evening to Villasmundo the III/76th Inf. of the "Napoli" of Maj. Nobile and the third battery of 75/27 CXXVI artillery unit ⁽¹⁷⁾.

As they unfold these complex movements, all intended to stem the enemy advance from the south of Syracuse, and then Augusta, Col. Ronco learned that late on July 10 that British tanks had bypassed and overwhelmed the recent checkpoints on the Mulinello bridge and at km. 8 of the Floridia-Syracuse roadway. He nevertheless planned for the dawn of the 11th a new advance on Syracuse, occupied by the British 17th Brigade at 21:00, the outcome of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

5. SELF DESTRUCTION THE OF FIXED DEFENSES AND INVESTMENT OF THE SECTOR SOUTH OF THE FORT (see map n. 17)

After the already examined and increasing episodes morning disorder within the Fortified town, the events hurried in the afternoon of 10 July. In fact, in the southern sector, the famous retreat of the 385th coastal Battalion on the ridge of Belvedere, it was followed by the retreat of the crew of the batteries "AS 309" and "AS 671" of Syracuse and then self-destruction of the powerful Works A of Cape S. Panagia with its two big 381 mm. guns.

So at 17:00 was blown up even the Navy's armed train 102-1- T at Targia, for the failure to supply the locomotive of water, but in truth, being sheltered by rock walls,

(16) A.U.S.E folder 1427, annexed 59/4 "Excerpt report (Gen. Rosario Fiumara for the events of the days 9, 10, 11 and 12 July 1943 concerning the conservation of Palazzolo and Vizzini."

(17) A.U.S.E folder 2124 / B folder and 1427, annexed 59/5: "Command, 76th Inf. Regiment 'Napoli': report of the operations carried out 10 to 15 July 1943".

that could long resist air and naval bombardments while remaining motionless.

Therefore around 17:00 of that July 10, four hours before the arrival of British troops in Syracuse, went spreading like wildfire around the psychosis of self-destruction that city, in compliance with known orders issued and confirmed by the fort Command even before the enemy landing from the air and from the sea and disseminated by Consul De Pasquale at dawn.

Compounding the disastrous situation in that sector also added the low cooperation especially information received by Adm. Leonardi, who on his part, however, little used and hurt the available linkages. The result was that the fort Command ignored for a long time the location of the reinforcement contingent of the "Napoli" Inf. Div and the German "Schmalz" group and not put the control of Armed Forces of Sicily aware of the main measures adopted and the events for which Adm. Leonardi was witness.

Another unfortunate episode that the tactical situation to the south got worse was an afternoon retreat from the ridge of Belvedere of the 540th Coastal Battalion of Maj. Campolillo before the enemy had attacked him, that opened for the English 5th Inf. Div. an unexpected gap in the Anapo and Priolo Gargallo and made it impossible for reinforcements from the west to reach Syracuse.

Also in the north-central area of the Fort, gravitating around Augusta, and that was not until then invested from the air it from the sea, the demolition reached their peak in the mid-afternoon of July 10. In fact, following an written order of Adm. Leonardi of 12:45, Naval Lt. Ungarelli of the 10th MAS Flotilla detachment based in Augusta burned at the headquarters that material that could not be transported ⁽¹⁸⁾. At about 17:30, he then blew up the radio center of the Dovecote, from which the British outposts another twenty kilometers distant ⁽¹⁹⁾. Half an hour later they were set on fire the Punta Cugno fuel depots in the Augusta bay, while demolition in the harbor by evening the

(18) A.U.S.E folder 012 Volume 4: Historical documents from the Office of the Navy about the operations in Sicily.

(19) E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 132.

Navy tugs *S. Angelo*, *S. Maria*, *N. 85*, *Sciacca* and *Procida* and the gunboat *Oriole* ⁽²⁰⁾.

By the next morning many batteries the fixed defense blown up at Augusta, including the "AS 269", the "AS 383", the "AS 896" and the "Biagio Asseretos", while scuttling the two armed pontoons and several floating structures - the defense breakwater.

In conclusion the batteries, the stations, the deposits, the armed train and some ships were destroyed themselves in every corner long time before the enemy entered the base, while no one was concerned to sabotage the famous Great Bridge on the Anapo but even to strictly demolish the port facilities of Augusta and Syracuse, which would have been so useful to the British.

At 18:30 Consul De Pasquale of the 7th Milmar Legion finally decided to attempt to connect with Adm. Leonardi at the Melilli caves, but without luck, because at that time the Fort Command had moved even further to the north and the local telephone exchange had been abandoned by the staff, as we later found the couriers sent by the Armed Forces Command of Sicily to have directly the news that he had tried unsuccessfully to inform Guzzoni⁽²¹⁾.

The new headquarters of Command Adm. Leonardi was established at the so-called "lookout place," the village of Melilli, where he seems to have continued to not hear and nor spot the explosions and fires, coming only received at 18:00 by the news that half an hour before the English had passed the Anapo river ⁽²²⁾. Then informed of the approach of the expected reinforcement of the "Napoli" Inf. Div., Adm. Leonardi started after 20:00 to Sortino accompanied by Col. Crescione, but returned discouraged on foot when the crew of his car scattered, who belonged to the Ronco column, heard of the air attack immediately from this tactical group during the march approach.

At 21:30 Admiral Leonardi had an interview at the Melilli cemetery with Col. Damian, commander of the 121st Coastal Regiment,

(20) OFFICE HISTORY OF MARINA: *La Manna italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II: *Navi militari perdute*, Rome 1969, p. 93 and p. 104.

(21) T. MARCON: *Augusta 1940-43*, op. cit., p. 131.

(22) E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 1:33.

and with Col. Schmalz, commander of the namesake German armored column from Paternò and Misterbianco and directed from north to counter the British advance in the heart of the Fortified town ⁽²³⁾.

Half an hour before the meeting, while the 17th Brigade of the English 5th Inf. Div. took possession of Syracuse capturing among other things fifteen seaplanes, the 13th Brigade of the same division was entered Floridia, after passing checkpoints at Mulinello and at km. 8 of road to Syracuse.

The last Italian Command to abandon Augusta was that of Milmart of Terravecchia, where at 23:00 came a relay race with Admiral Leonardi orders to sabotage the spaces covered.

Shortly after midnight so the Console De Pasquale moved the headquarters of the Northern Naval Command to Carrubbazza, in an anti-gas shelter, where it should have been. Also the control of the sea front of Augusta, which, however, was not retrieved any sign ⁽²⁴⁾.

In summary we can say with the Zingali that "the destruction was completed on the afternoon of 10 and 11 in the morning and that many of the destroyed vehicles could also be used to counter the enemy bypass operations. This is the fact, that looks very similar to that of the one who commits suicide for fear of death" ⁽²⁵⁾.

The same Supreme Command, reached the first reports on the amazing events in the Fortified town, it could not help but to intervene at 21:30 of the 10th, asking Superesercito and Supermarina to provide further clarification on the incident, "*as it is known to all that the defense should be maintained until the last position & last man*" and above all to indicate "*for such special events had become essential to the destruction of the radiotelegraph station of Augusta*" communicated from Supermarina ⁽²⁶⁾.

We will see in the next chapter the development of events and

(23) A folder A.U.S.E 1427, annexed 59/14 "Report on the coastal 121st Regiment, Colonel Francesco Damiano, 10 to 15 July 1943 '.

(24) T. MARCON: *Augusta 1940-43*, op. cit., p. 132-133.

(25) G. Zingali: *L'invasione della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 139.

(26) A.U.S.E folder 1501: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command:" Annex 475: telex of the Supreme Command No. 51474/op of 10 July 1943.

the outcome of the counteroffensive launched by the "*Napoli*" Inf. Div. and "Schmalz" group to attempt to regain control of the fort. This in conjunction with the other Italian-German counterattacks ordered by Gen. Guzzoni in the areas of Gela and Licata.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ITALIAN - GERMAN COUNTER-ATTACK OF THE 11TH**1. AERIAL OPERATIONS OF 11 JULY**

Before delving into the records of ground operations for the three planned counter attacks of July 11 in the areas of Augusta-Syracuse, Gela and Licata, we need to summarize the contribution of German-Italian air forces during that important day.

After returning their units to Italy and on the islands in the sense indicated in paragraph 4 of Chapter VI, the German 2nd *Luftflotte* decided to successively use during July 11 against the British sector most of the available Bf. 110, Ju. 88 and He. 111, the latter type of torpedo bomber retrieved from France.

While the Germans put up their aeronautical plans, at 06:30 on 11 July nine Italian cant z.1007 bis bombers, from Sardinia, they took on American transport in the waters of Gela, dropping from high altitude. The transport *Monrovia*, Command ship of Adm. Hewitt, was narrowly missed and a bomb exploded- so close to transport troops *Barnett* to kill seven soldiers and set a fire in the cargo hold. For the same cause also reported damage the steamer *Orizaba*. These bombers at high altitude were followed by four Ju. 87 dive bombers of the R. Aeronautica, taking off from Sicily under the escort of seven new M.C. 205, which took aim without some luck the landing craft in front of Marina di Palma.

Against the British sector in the waters of Syracuse they led instead at 12:15 eight Italian Re.2002 and ten G.50 assault, but this action was unsuccessful and ended in disaster because

of killing three G.50 in combat and the destruction of the another seven aircraft of the same type during a raid on the airport of Reggio Calabria during their landing.

In the same area, and precisely opposite to the beaches of Avola, twenty-two Germans Ju.88, for the price of two of them, hit and burned the Dutch steamer *Baarn* loaded with ammunition, which had to be scuttled by the crew before it exploded.

Meanwhile, at 11:00 of the second *Luftflotte* Command had announced that despite deeming the British sector most important revolving around Augusta and Syracuse, as a result of new orders received from the OBS, he shifted the focus of its action in the Gela area, for there for ground support of the counterattack of the "Livorno" and "H. Goering" divisions.

In accordance with the above provisions, forty F.W.190 and forty-seven Bf. 110 swooped in the morning on the waters of Gela and sank the US ship landing for the tanks *LST-158*, losing two aircraft. So between 15:50 and 16:00 thirty Ju.88 hit with three bombs in the same area the Liberty ship *Robert Rowan* loaded with ammunition, which exploded and sank an hour later in shallow water, continuing to burn long with superstructures emerging. This last German air raid was however countered briskly by "Spitfires" of the 92nd Squadron of the R.A.F., who hit three bombers.

At 18:55 he began a second offensive phase of II *Fliegerkorps* by seventy-six Ju.88 on the waters of Gela and Licata. Although it had not caused any damage to the enemy and had been paid with the loss of three raiders aircraft, this new German air action caused a considerable nervousness among the crews of American vessels being targeted. In fact the raid had just finished when arrived at 22:40 on that same field the US 52nd Transport Squadron, composed of 144 C-47 "Dakota", which had taken off from Tunisian airports and had to drop in the Farello area east of Gela 2,304 paratroopers belonging to I and II Battalion of the 504th Regiment of Col. Tucker, as well as to a Art. group and a pioneers Battalion ⁽¹⁾. 1 C-47, approaching

(1) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p.175. This second American Airborne assault was ordered by Gen. Patton in the early hours of 11 July in order to support the full deployment of the 1st Inf. Div. on the beaches of Gela, the haste with which the operation was organized but not really went to the precision, so much so that some land-based anti-aircraft units and American ships were not informed promptly of the project.

overnight in a formation several miles long, were mistaken for enemy aircraft from American land based antiaircraft batteries, which then opened an intense focus on them.

To escape this barrage the American pilots came near to the sea at low altitude flying over the anchorage of enemy ships and issuing conventional recognition signals. But also the scorer of the U.S. Navy, excited and fatigued by the previous German air raid, were unable to identify the "Dakota" and also began firing furiously. The result was that eight C-47 renounced the air drop and returned to North Africa, and while twenty-three of them were shot down - but only six before the launch of paratroopers - and eighty-two were dead, the sixteen missing and one hundred and thirty wounded⁽²⁾.

The airdrop was, however, also made, although the 1,900 paratroopers actually launched under such emergency conditions only two hundred reached the first goal at Farella, becoming then 555 by the afternoon of 12 July⁽³⁾.

At the same time reminded the German night attack, eight G.50 assault and nine Re.2002 of the R. Aeronautica took off from Crotone reached the area between Syracuse and Capo Passero to perform, between 19:00 and 19:15, a raid that was not assisted with good luck. Indeed, the American steamer *Joseph G. Cannon*, being at that time off the coast of Avola, it was a direct hit by a bomb but went all the way through the ship without exploding, then allowing it to reach Malta by its own means. Against this three Re.2002 failed to return to base.

During the night of 11 July took place other raids, all equally unsuccessful, by nineteen Sm. 79 torpedo bombers and twelve Italian bombers at high altitude (nine Cant z.1007 and three four-engine P.108). Again the price paid for similar missions without success was high, since it did not return to base an Sm.79, while three Cant were wrecked on landing.

Undisturbed instead occurred a English diversionary naval bombardment waged against Marsala and Trapani in the night between 11 and July 12 by the two modern battleships *King*

(2) M. Blumenson: *Sicily: whose victory?* op. cit., p. 73

(3) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 182.

George V and *Howe* ⁽⁴⁾, an episode that has provided some additional reasons for the critics to accuse the Italian fleet of inactivity.

2. PREPARATION FOR THE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE IN THE AUGSBURG-SYRACUSE NAVAL BASE (see map n. 18)

The first news that Syracuse had been occupied by British troops since the 21:00 of July 10 was given with great fanfare in Rome during the night by the German military attaché Gen. von Rintelen. As a result, after the already examined message of 21:30 of the 10th, the Supreme Command sent to Superesercito, Supermarina and Superaereo the following categorical order of 01:20 hours of July 11⁽⁵⁾.

"The use by the enemy of the port of Syracuse would have very serious consequences for the purposes of defense. I place so that the largest possible number of means naval & aircraft & adequate land reserves are employed to drive the enemy into the sea before he has been able to consolidate himself. "

We just looked at what was done by the German-Italian aircraft on 11 July and, in the absence of any naval counter-offensive, we now see the preparation and holding of land counterattacks around the entire Naval Base.

To mention news issued by Gen. von Rintelen about Syracuse echoed in the night of the 10th communication, radio-telegraphed to Hitler and relayed to Rome, Col. Schmalz, commander of the Battle Group of the same named, which advancing from Paterno to the south, had met sailors and airmen escaping from the Fortified town and had entered at night in Augusta completely cleared of defenders and enemies and the works largely destroyed

Misinterpreted by news that the "Schmalz" group was arriving at Augusta "freeing it", then he took the moves in the daily

(4) A. RAVEN - J. ROBERTS: *British battleships of World War II*, London 1981, p. 369.

(5) A.U.S.E., folder 1501, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", attachment 530: dispatch of the Supreme Command No. 14706 / op of 01:20 hours on 11 July 1943.

release of the Supreme Command that proclaimed hastily:

"Augusta occupied by the enemy yesterday evening was reoccupied by our forces this morning" ⁽⁶⁾.

For his part, the Commander of Port "E" of Catania confirmed the news of the influx in the city of numerous stragglers belonging to the Augusta-Siracusa Naval Base, so Gen. Guzzoni, hitherto left unaware of the happening chaos, he sent this morning to reconnoiter on site Maj. Della Perota. At the same time the Commander of Armed Forces of Sicily, received via the G.S.R.E. the message of the 01:20 of the Supreme Command, who was also estimated that the port of Syracuse should be regained as soon as possible, before the local enemy consolidation.

Given the above, Gen. Guzzoni ordered at 03:30 on 11 July at the XVI Corps Command that the group "Schmalz" also counter-attack towards Siracusa and at 07:45 that the entire "H. Goering" Division as soon gained success in the direction of Gela, is released and was also employed in the direction of Syracuse-Avola, via Victoria and Ragusa ⁽⁷⁾.

That provision of 07:45 was later reiterated by Guzzoni at 10:30 in an interview with Gen. Rossi ⁽⁸⁾. On this occasion, the Commander of Armed Forces of Sicily, which was realized gradually in the Fortified town of the incident, complained that local defenses had been inexplicably blown up as early as day 10 and on the night of the 11th, without a direct threat looming over the city and the port ⁽⁹⁾.

Even Colonel Schmalz, in charge of going first from Augusta Siracusa, complained vehemently about what had happened at Augusta, with both Adm. Leonardi and Colonels

(6) A.U.S.E., 1444 folder: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", on 11 July 1943. p. 3. As we will see in chapter IX. paragraph 3. the British actually set foot in Augsburg only in the evening of July 12, coming from the sea.

(7) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A: "Report of the Command FF.AA of Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 22 and p. 24. At the same time Guzzoni ordered that the "Livorno", div. Inf., after the planned joint operation with the "H. Goering" of Gela, it was diverted on the other threatened sector Licata.

(8) A.U.S.E., 2228 folder: "Interview with the General Excellence Guzzoni Rossi."

(9) A.U.S.E., 2124 / B folder, file 2124 / A: "Report of the Command FF. AA. Sicily from 15 June to 20 June 1943". P.25.

Damian and Crescione, met again at the Melilli cemetery on 09:30 of the 11th, both with the envoy of Gen. Guzzoni, Maj. Della Perora, contacted at Priolo Gargallo towards 13:00 ⁽¹⁰⁾.

After meeting with Col. Schmalz, Adm. Leonardi sent for inspection of Augusta Col. Damian, commander of the 121st Coastal Regiment, and ordered the II/76th Inf. "Napoli" of Maj. Nobile to move from Villasmundo to the stronghold of Luogo Grande along joined by 3rd 75/27 Bty. of the CXXVI group. This unit reached the new position at 19:00, going to be part of the Command of the 121st Coastal Regiment of Col. Damian with the task of protecting behind the advance of the "Schmalz" column ⁽¹¹⁾.

The two battalions part of the 121st coastal Regiment though there was a lot to expect. In fact, after the famous inappropriate withdraw of the 540th Battalion. from the ridge of the Belvedere in the previous afternoon, also northernmost 504th Battalion retreated prematurely at 10:30 of the 11th from locations around Melilli, following a hasty order of Col. Crescione and naval Commander Gasparrini. This coastal battalion was then reported on its positions at 14:30 by a counter order of Col. Damiano, but the fact remained that its withdrawal occurred at a time where the maximum should have been his support in the 'Schmalz' column, engaged in Priolo Gargallo.

Finally Adm. Leonardi met at 13:00 also with the naval Commander Turchi departed from Augusta twenty-four hours before, and ordered him to round up his men on the road to Lentini and bring them back in line to Augusta, where, however, continued the demolition of the last batteries still intact ⁽¹²⁾. The order was carried out and therefore in the afternoon of that 11 July was

(10) We recall that the "Schmalz" group was then composed of the following units:

- Korner Regiment (115th Regiment of the 15th Div. "Sizilien") consists of two motorized Inf. Battalion
- each with four co., the first co. with a Special links platoon, a motorcyclists platoon, a pioneer platoon, a accompanying weapons co. and a antitank co. of 75 mm. and 50 mm guns:
- A Tank Battalion of the H. Goering" Div. with four companies;
- An Art. Group of the "H. Goering" Div. with three 150 mm bty. ;
- a Recon Unit amassed at 16:00;
- A Health unit with an ambulances section.

To see everything, A.U.S.E., folder 1427, p. 66 and Annex 23.

(11) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attachment 59/5: "Report of the 76th Inf. Regiment "Napoli", and Annex 59/14, "Report on the 121st Coastal Regiment."

(12) T. MARCON: *Augusta 1940-43* op. cit., p. 136-139

formed to the west of the city, straddling the road to Villasmundo, another barrage with sailors and disbanded soldiers, also in terms of rear support of the advancing “Schmalz” column.

This last German unit got in position in front of the bay of Augusta his pieces and they undertook shortly after noon an artillery duel with cruiser *Uganda* and the destroyers *Nubzan* and *Eskimo*, giving the British the impression that the Fortified town defenses on the front of the sea were still efficient.

3. THE COUNTER ATTACK OF “NAPOLI” DIVISION AND "SCHMALZ" GROUP ON SYRACUSE (see map n. 18)

As it was planned by Col. Ronco, mobile contingents of the "Napoli" Inf. Div., places his orders around Solarino, they advanced at 06:00 of July 11 from that location to Floridia with Syracuse goal after which overnight had been swept away by the enemy checkpoints on the Mulinello bridge and at km. 8 of the roadway between these two villages. Simultaneously he descended on Syracuse, along the line joining Melilli-Priolo Gargallo the German Battle Group of Colonel Schmalz.

Col. Ronco, as we know, had met in Solarino under his command during the night of 10th, in addition to the II/75th Inf. and the X Art. Group of 105/28, 150 survivors of the Battle Group of Canicattini Bagni, the substantial mobile unit "D" of Lt. Col. D'Andretra and two mortars companies, one of which was converted into a rifle company.

The concept of Action stipulated that the left wing, consisting of the II/75th Inf. (Minus the 6th Cyclists co.), of 150 foot soldiers of the I/75th Inf., residual platoon of the 54th antitank co., by a platoon of the CIII antitank Battalion, two pieces duel-purpose 88 mm. and by a Germans unit of 20 mm., were to initially cover the flank, holding the Diddino Bridge and then alongside the march of the main column. This last, directed decisively on Floridia and then Syracuse, included the headquarters company of the 75th Inf. Regiment, two rifle companies, a motorized machine gun company, the tank company with eighteen Renault R/35, a sapper company and a mortars 81mm. company, the 10th battery of 75/18, the regimental antitank company, two cyclists platoons

and two pieces 88 mm. German with the group aggregate by 20 mm. Flak. Finally, the X Art. group of 105/28 and the remaining four Germans "88" remained in position on the heights of Solarino to support the movement of the column, until they had not received orders to move forward⁽¹³⁾.

The movement began at 06:00 on the way from Solarino Florida, but after just one kilometer the vanguard of the column collided with the vanguard of the 13th Brigade of the English 5th Inf. Div. who conquered Florida the previous evening, was advancing in the opposite direction of it to Solarino. Thus he developed a meeting engagement that lasted from 06:30 on those positions until 13:00.

At first the English column, touched by the fire of concentration. X Group of 105/28 and the Germans "88", stopped the march, retreated to regroup and then turned some of its elements along a side street against the Diddino Bridge. Hence the violent struggle lasted until 10:30, when the stronghold commander, Lt. Col. Sisino, announced the successful infiltration of enemy troops between the bridge itself and the fork for Sortino. Col. Ronco momentarily restored the situation in this sector by sending a motorized machine gun platoon, a tank platoon and thereafter a rifle company. At the same time two incursions of British tanks carried on the front and on the left side "were cut short by pieces from 47/32, but particularly from the two German sections of 88 mm., which were shooting with incredible speed and precision"⁽¹⁴⁾. Against such German artillery was then facing the British counter-battery fire.

Shortly before midday the mobile unit, "in addition to the total destruction of the two Flak sections, had suffered heavy losses in men and material, while the opposing pressure on the front and on the left flank of the group, became more aggressive and dangerous"⁽¹⁵⁾. The same Col. Ronco, drove towards Diddino Bridge to personally look into the situation, miraculously escaped

(13) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attached 59/2, "Report on the operations carried out by the column commanded by Colonel Ronco between 10 and 13 July 1943 on the march from Palazzolo Acreide in Syracuse," pp. 6-7.

(14) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annexed 59/13: "Mobile Group' D ': report of the feat of arms of the days 10,11,12 and 13 July 1943 in the Solariono area, "pp. 6-7.

(15) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annexed 59/13: 'Mobile Group' D ': report of the feat of arms of the days 10,11,12 and 13 July 1943 in the Solariono area ", p. 2

an ambush that riddled his car with bullets.

To prevent the complete encirclement of his mobile unit, projected along the Floridia road, Col. Ronco decided to order the retreat in the hills northwest of Solarino, in whose eastern suburbs were already sighted British patrols. This retreat occurred between 13:00 and 15:00 with calm and in perfect order, but not for everything the II/75th Inf. and the remains of the I Battalion, that the area on Diddino Bridge were largely caught. The percentage of Italian losses in fighting wavered around 16%, while that of the two sections of the German Flak was respectively 84% and 87% ⁽¹⁶⁾.

On new positions northwest of the town of Solarino, therefore occupied by the British, the remaining troops of Col. Ronco resumed contact with the British 13th Brigade from 17:00 until the night, exchanging artillery fire and resisting a violent night assault .

Meanwhile in the morning of the 11th, as we have said, the German column of Col. Schmalz had fallen along the Melilli-Priolo Gargallo direction, pushing to the north of Syracuse. This tactical group made contact with the avant-garde of the 17th Brigade belonging to the same English 5th Inf. Div. at 11:30, just southwest of Priolo, and managed to contain the advance until the evening. Col. Schmalz could not, however, launch a decisive attack, because he had failed the prerequisite for a link to his right with the Ronco column, rejected at Solarino ⁽¹⁷⁾.

The same Gen. Conrath, commander of the entire, "H. Goering " division; was urged by Col. Schmalz to call at 19:20 at the command of the Italian XVI. Corps to ask that the elements of the "Napoli" Inf. Div. not to fall back further. In return Gen. Rossi assured him that the "Napoli" "*would not fall back, but would resume the attack as soon as possible*"⁽¹⁸⁾. In connection with this promise the XVI Corps Command sent at 20:00, by a motorcyclist, the following order to the Commander of the "Napoli" Inf. Div. at Vizzini (19):

(16) *Ibid*, p. 2.

(17) A.U.S.E., folder 1427. Annex 99 "Report on the operations in this sector of the XVI Corps Days to 10 to 20 July 1943", p. 8

(18) A.U.S.E., 1427. Folder 'Diary Historical Military XVI Corps', p. 62

(19). *Ibid*, p. 63

"It is absolutely necessary and urgent that 75th Inf. does not diverge from Solarino Florida-occupied by the enemy and that you now harmonized the use of the German group and the 75th Inf. according to the current situation. Not acceptable return your command to Palazzolo and troops of the 75th. Resume immediately forward positions with the task of stemming the progress of the enemy attacking from the front and flank. Give me overall location situation of the 'Napoli' with biker himself. "

An hour later the Armed Forces Sicily Command expressed similar dissatisfaction with the behavior of the 75th Inf. Regiment between Solarino and Florida. In fact, at 21:00 Gen. Guzzoni, already at 18:20 he had told Superesercito that the "Napoli" Inf. Div., had "lost the offensive efficiency" ⁽²⁰⁾, as well telegraphed to Gen. Rossi:

"In front of Syracuse ineffective attack 75th Inf. makes critical situation where the enemy is contained only by German troops at Priolo and Solarino.

Need absolutely prevent enemy landings more troops & extend his bridgehead. Tomorrow the 12th current will take place aviation massive actions on Syracuse. I ask that they be extended to Avola and along the coast to Gela & Licara. In relation to what is necessary apply maximum effort "Goering" division because tomorrow the 12th may contain advanced enemy troops from Syracuse and Avola, not ceasing to advance on Vittoria and Comiso, transfer which is indispensable and urgent. In connection with this please change your order operations 01/8200/op today. Ensure Guzzoni" ⁽²¹⁾.

Regarding the request of the extensive air strikes, it must be said that in fact the Supreme Command had sent to Superaereo and to O.B.S. already at 11:35 hours of July 10 a precise request for a massive intervention of the air forces on areas of Augusta Syracuse, Gela and Licata ⁽²²⁾. The same Supreme Command, as we have seen, had also reiterated the need to use "*the greatest possible number of naval & aerial means*" to drive the Enemy into the sea ⁽²³⁾. Then on the day of the 11th Gen.

(20) A.U.S.E., 2229 folder: "Diary Historical Miliare of the 6th Army", phonogram n. 16365 / op of 18:20 hours on 11 July 1943 of control FF.AA of Sicily

(21) A.U.S.E., cited folder 2229 Annex 27: dispatch of Command FF.AA of Sicily n. 16362 / op of 21.00 on 11 July 1943

(22) A.U.S.E., folder 1501, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command., Annex 481: phonogram of the Supreme Command No. 51452 / op of 11:35 hours of July 10, 1943,

(23) *Ibid*, attachment 530: (phonogram of the Supreme Command n, 14706 / op of 01:20 hours on 11 July 1943 aimed at Supermarina, Superesercito and O.B.S,

Ambrosio had a meeting with von Rintelen and Kesselring mainly based on the collaboration of the Luftwaffe operations in Sicily.

Finally on 11.50 of July 12, the Supreme Command once again pleaded a maximum use of the Italian-German aeronautical resources with the following message ⁽²⁴⁾.

"Lack of efficiency of our air force agrees to employ all available units mainly fighters in favor of Sicily. Even air forces stationed Sardinia will consequently be moved for use in favor Sicilia, except for interceptors units."

Superaereo in truth was not insensitive to these pressures and already on July 11, with circular 1B/1076, ordered the displacement of many air units to best meet the current needs ⁽²⁵⁾.

Regarding instead the operational order 01/8200/op of the XVI Army Corps Command, which Guzzoni in his aforementioned message to Gen. Rossi asked to change, it must be said that it concerned - as we shall see later - a new offensive of the "H. Goering" on Vittoria and Comiso, after that we will look at the Gela area. Half an hour after the counter order of Guzzoni, ie at 21:30 on the 11th, Gen. Rossi therefore changed these arrangements and asked to "H. Goering" to develop, after the counterattack of Gela, a broader operation that affected not only Vittoria and Comiso, but embracing the northernmost conjunction of Vizzini -Buccheri - Palazzolo Acreide, with a view to a final counter-offensive of the German division directly on Syracuse ⁽²⁶⁾.

However the opportunity to regain Syracuse had been lost forever, both due to the examined retreat of the Ronco column and hence its lack of coordination with the descent of the "Schmalz" group beyond Priolo Gargallo, and for the mentioned little support given this German unit from the 504th Coastal Battalion.

Siracusa, after being occupied by land at 21:00 on 10 July by the British 17th Brigade, also was subject to a bloodless landing

(24) *Ibid*, Annex 601: phonogram n. 51497/op of 11:50hours of July 12, 1943

(25) *Ibid*, Annex 551: circular Superaereo 1B /1076 of 11 July 1943

(26) A.U.S.E., folder 142, Annex 26 and 28: dispatches from the command of the XVI Corps n. 01/8200 / op and n. 01/8203 / op 11 July 1943

from the sea at noon of the 11th, after the morning had been opened in the bay some safety corridors by British minesweepers. Its port is not sabotaged, but battered by bombs, was quickly put in a position to receive a traffic volume hitherto unknown, so that on July 13 was landed in just eight and a quarter hours an entire British convoy of twelve transport ⁽²⁷⁾.

4. THE PREPARATION FOR THE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE IN THE GELA SECTOR (See map n. 19)

As it unfolds towards the beaches of Gela and Scoglitti known failed counterattacks conducted on July 10 by the mobile unit "E" of Niscemi, by the III/33rd Inf. "Livorno" of Lt. Col. Bruni and two columns of the "H. Goering" Div., the Command of the XVI Corps, received at 13:45 from Gen. Guzzoni the availability of the "Livorno" Inf. Div., communicated to Gen. Conrath at 13:50 that same July 10 that his "H. Goering" and the same "Livorno" would develop in a simultaneous counter-forces on Gela, according to the successive detailed orders ⁽²⁸⁾.

Ruled by Gen. Conrath the possibility of developing such a "systematic counter-offensive" in the same day of 10, due to a simultaneous splitting of the "H. Goering" to attack Case Priolo and the Dirillo valley, Gen. Rossi gave in the afternoon the same German division and the "Livorno" orders for combined counter-attack starting at 06:00 the next day.

With the fall of darkness was undertaken the march to the starting points, slowed by encumbrance of traffic and by enemy air raids ⁽²⁹⁾. Precisely because of these setbacks the "Livorno" Div. came to the starting points at 05:00 and not at midnight as expected, while the II/34th was, who started from the most

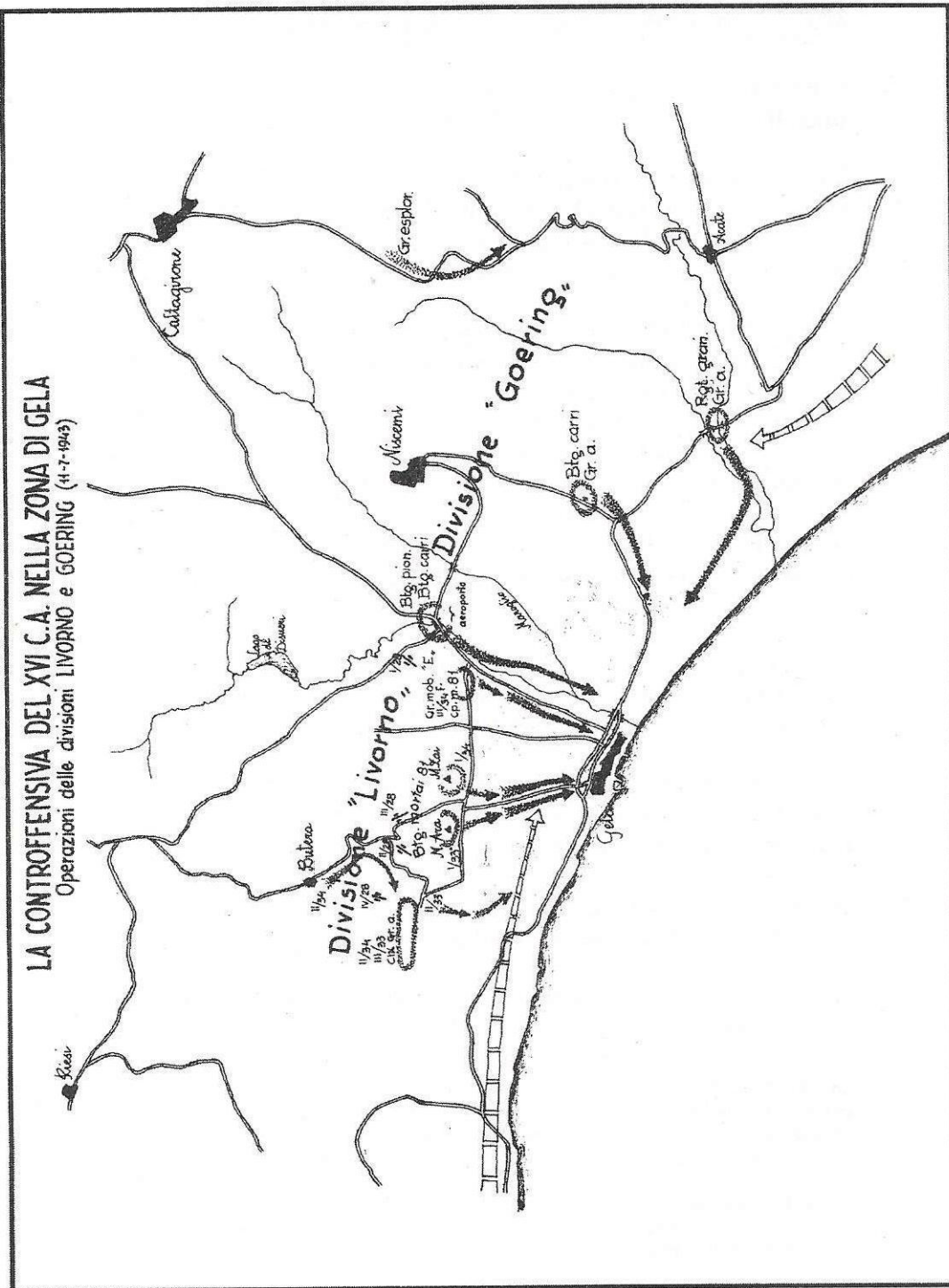
(27) S.E. MORISON: *History of U.S. naval operations in world war II*, vol. IX: *Sicily, Salerno, Anzio*, Boston 1954 Italian translation by S. M. E., Historical Office Army library, ranking 52/280, p. 253.

(28) A.U.S.E., 1427 folder: "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps" pages. 37-38.

(29) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 99 quater: 'Report on the operations carried out in the sector XVI Corps', p. 7.

THE XVI CORPS COUNTER-OFFENSIVE IN THE AREA OF GELA
- Operations of the LIVORNO and GOERING divisions (11 July 1943)

TAVOLA N. 19



rearward position of Butera and suffered major damage in the nightly bombings, arrived only at 13:00 of the 11th at the junction at Monte S. Nicola.

On the German side a certain slowdown in the night march was instead determined by encumbrance and very little agility of seventeen powerful "Tiger" tanks supplied to the "H. Goering", evident especially when they had to cross the constrictions inside the inhabited areas⁽³⁰⁾.

At 21:15 on 10 July, meanwhile, the Command of the XVI Corps had confirmed to Gen. Guzzoni that the two divisions would begin the planned joint counter-offensive of Gela at 06:00 the following day if necessary and had asked for a "preventive and simultaneous" air support⁽³¹⁾.

The Command of the Armed Forces of Sicily immediately secured air support for the attack on the planned hour⁽³²⁾, which is why Gen. Rossi, despite having been able to at 02:00 of the 11th that the "Livorno" would come on the starting bases only at 05:00 instead of midnight, did not change the times and orders to initiate the attack undoubtedly at 06:00⁽³³⁾.

Orders of the XVI Corps Command anticipated a counter-offensive "top down" as follows.

The "H. Goering" armored division pointed east and north of Gela with three columns:

- a left would advanced out from Biscari to Dirillo Bridge, and then proceed along the Vittoria-Gela railway, the Panzergrenadier regiment composed of two infantry battalions, a tank company and an artillery group;

- at the center would operate from Niscemi on Case Priolo, Piano Lupo and Case Spinasantà a tank battalion supported by an artillery group;

- a right would operate from Ponte Olivo, flanking the roadway 117, a tank battalion and the pioneers battalion.

(30) The tank mod. 'Tiger' I-E weighed 55 tons., It was 6.21 m. long, m 3.73 m wide.. 2.86 high, had a shield of 110 mm. a crew of five men, a maximum speed of 38 km/h, and an armament of a 88 mm gun and two 7.92mm machine guns. See. F.M. SENGGER und ETIERLIN: *Die Kampfpanzer von 1916-1966*, p. 78:

(31) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 44

(32) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, Annex 20: No phonogram. 337/877 of July 10, 1943

(33) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps," pp. 48-49

In the second row was intended the recon unit, moving from Caltagirone to S. Pietro, so that the "H. Goering" took all of available tanks, ie 82 of the III and IV model and seventeen "Tiger" supplied by the "Sizilien" div. .

The "Livorno" Inf. Div. would push on Gela from the north and from the west according to the following breakdown ⁽³⁴⁾:

Left-column Col. Manini, with the III/34th Inf., the I/28th Art., a co. of the 81 mm mortars Battalion and the bloody remains of the mobile unit "E" of Niscemi, it would be coming down from Monte Castelluccio along the road 117 Ponte Olivo-Gela. This column, in the justified absence of Col. Martini, was in effect commanded by Lt. Col. Leonardi of the III/34th;

Right-column Col. Mona, with I/33rd Inf., the I/34th Inf., III/28th Art. and the rest of the 81 mm. Mortar battalion, it would be coming down Monte dell'Apa and Monte Zai along the sides of Butera –Gela road;

flanking-column on the far right of Lt. Col. Mastrangeli., with the II/33rd Inf. and IV/28th Art., which was to advance along the railway between the Butera station and Gela;

- contingents of the second row of Lt. Col. Bruni, with III/33rd Inf., the II/34th Inf., the II/28th Art. and the CIX Art. group of 149/13 from the Army Corps. These contingents were allocated at the foot of the Poggio della Femmina, except the II/34th Inf., delayed by aerial bombing and that -as we have said - came to the junction of Monte S. Nicola only at 13:00 of the 11th.

The right column and flanking column of "Livorno" were placed under the orders of Gen. Perugini, second in command of the division.

5. THE COUNTER ATTACK OF THE "LIVORNO" AND "H. GOERING" ON GELA (see map n. 19)

At 06:50 of July 11 the command of the XVIII coastal brigade, who had been forewarned for over an hour of imminent counterattack in the area, called the Command of XVI Corps to communicate that the "German armored Grenadier Regiment had started regularly the attack at 06:00"⁽³⁵⁾.

(34) See. Also N. VICINO: *La battaglia di Gela*, Florence 1967, p. 38.

(35) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 50.

The left column of the "Livorno" moved to the attack, however, at 06:30 without the support of I/28th Art. of Maj. Artigiani, then he fell in combat, due to connection problems between the patrol O.C. and the batteries ⁽³⁶⁾. At the same time, as we have said, nine bombers in Italian departed from Sardinia attacking American transport ships in the waters of Gela, damaging two.

US troops at that time were in front of the two Axis divisions belonged to the 4th Ranger Battalion, the II/26th Inf., the III/26th Inf., the I/16th Inf. and the II/16th Inf. of the 1st Div. on the beaches of Gela and, more to the east, to the II/180th of the 45th Inf. Div. landed at Scoglitti ⁽³⁷⁾. They, however, were scattered over a large area and, moreover, were at that time of the morning with no air cover as the fighter squadrons were not taken off either from Pantelleria or from Malta because of fog ⁽³⁸⁾.

The Americans on the beaches were still lacking tanks, which had no place on smaller Dukws means of landing, while the larger amphibious units could not get close to the shore because of the shallow water ⁽³⁹⁾. It was therefore decided that the tanks were unloaded during the 11th using barges or pontoons. Just laboriously landed from a barge at 02:00 ten, medium tanks, which had been blocked, however, due to the soft sand on the beach.

So at 08:00 on the 11th, when already the battle raged, naval Commander Wright was able to put in place two floating docks that joined to the biggest amphibious LST ships to the beaches, overcoming the pitfalls of the surf. Therefore the true and proper discharge of US armored vehicles was not realized before 11:30, while more time was needed to the forewarned working groups to remove the tanks waterproofing.

For a certain period of time then the Americans were forced to rely solely on five of the ten tanks

(36) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on fight of the Gela plain (11-12 July 1943) which took part in the III Battalion of the 34th Inf. Regiment "Livorno." P. 2

(37) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op cit., Pp 165-166. The batteries then available to Americans belonged to V, VII and XXIII Art. Bns. still incomplete, in front of Gela and CLXXI group in the field of Scoglitti.

(38) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 143

(39) E.B. POTTER - C. W. NIMITZ: *La grande guerra sui mari*, op. cit., p. 188

landed from the barge at 02:00, the only ones who managed to extricate himself from the sandy grip and went to the counter-attack with all their waterproofing, remaining, however, soon deprived of ammunition ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Compounding the particular American crisis situation in terms of Gela on that morning of July 11, 1943 there came also the shortage of anti-tank guns, due to the sinking ship *LST-313* in charge landing of the bulk of such weapons of the 26th tactical group of the division. As we know, this amphibious unit had been set on fire and then sank the evening of the 10th by a German Bf. 109 with wing bombs.

As if that were not enough, the US Navy was unprepared for action that morning, and because the front of the beaches of Gela the ships (cruisers *Boise* and *Savannah* and destroyers *Butler* and *Glennon*) were now devoid of observation aircraft, and because the terrestrial link units did not give the news until 08:30 ⁽⁴¹⁾.

Without suspecting such deficiencies in the field opponent, the columns of the two divisions of the Axis made contact with the first lines of the American beachhead. Along the coastal railway from Vittoria the Grenadier Regiment of the "H. Goering", took first attack at 06:00, he reached Senia Ferrata accompanied by twenty tanks of the armored company. At the center of the entire Italian-German offensive deployment the III/34th Inf. of Lt. Col. Leonardi, the first Italian unit to move at 06:30, protected on the left by the remains of the mobile unit "E", sweeping at 08:00 on the right of the roadway #117 the American vanguards to Poggi Frumento and Molinazzo, without the initial help of the I/28th Art., who opened his support fire only at that time.

At 07:30 at the right column of Col. Mona moved along the roadway Butera - Gela, also overcoming the enemy outposts, while the attack set off at 07:45 from Ponte Olivo, focusing on Case Aliotta, the right wing German armor, which it had been delayed by the previous difficult crossing the Niscemi by

(40) S.E. MORISON: *History of U.S., naval operations in World War II*, vol. IX cit., Italian translation by the S.M.E., pp. 176-177.

(41) *Ibid*, p. 175. Every American tactical group had an attached unit for the coastal fire control, radio link with supporting naval units assigned to that segment. See. S.E. MORISON: *In guerra su due oceani*, op. cit., p. 253

tanks. Finally at 08:00 the advance of the German central column that overcame the resistance at Case Priolo and whose movements had to be synchronized with those of the previous right wing, aiming both these columns of the "H. Goering" it goes into the so-called Valle del Signore to the east of Gela.

To that of 08:00 of 11 July, in the continuing absence of anti tank contrasts and any enemy intervention Naval Air, the possibility of a quick success of the joint Italian- German counter attack it seemed anything but remote. Especially unstoppable appeared in the eyes of US observers the advance of powerful German tanks both along the coast and along the Gela river ⁽⁴²⁾. The latter had arrived, according to US reports, about three kilometers from the outskirts of the city when, at about 8:30, was received aboard T.F.81 of Adm. Hall the first anxious request for naval support fire ⁽⁴³⁾. It was in fact to be exact at 08:29 that the cruiser *Savannah* first opened fire on German tanks from Ponte Olivo, then moving on his fire at 9:02 on the second German armored division that followed the first less than a mile. Later, at 09:17, this cruiser took aim at the Italian infantry, namely the left column including the III/34th Inf. ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Meanwhile also the destroyer *Glennon* had opened fire at 8:47 against German tanks of the central column, which at Case Priolo now moving toward Spinasantà, shooting at them for an hour and ten minutes.

The greatest danger, however, according to the Lt. Col. Darby of the American *Rangers*, then was the right German armored column from Ponte Olivo, which the *Savannah* had just ceased to shoot. It was then invoked the intervention against the target of the other cruiser sector, *Boise*, which took effect targeted the Germanic right column at 10:40, disrupting the ranks in a short time ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

At 11:00 and at 11:22 joined the naval bombardment by the

(42) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 167-168.

(43) S.E. MORISON: *History of U.S., naval operations in World War II*, vol. IX, cit., Italian translation by the S.M.E. p. 177. The *Savannah* was armed with fifteen 152 mm guns, and eight 127 mm.

(44) *Ibid*, p. 177 and Summary chart page. 180

(45) *Ibid* p. 178-179

two destroyers the *Laub* and *Cowie*, just as it became increasingly difficult to distinguish from the edge of the targets and the shooting effects because of the smoke coming from the fires of wheat fields. The naval fire went thus diminishing and taking intermittent character, until it ceased altogether shortly after 11:30. To contrast the last Italian-German offensive thrust remained rather some field batteries stationed among the sand dunes.

As we have seen, the first shots fired by the sea on the "Livorno" were those directed from the *Savannah*, starting at 9:17, against the left column comprising the III/34th Inf. At that time that the Italian contingent was attacking the second enemy line in Poggio Rosario and Case Salera, five hundred meters beyond the first American line already overcome at 08:00. The crossing of that short stretch of land was made so far bloody from the naval shooting, as well as from nourished gunfire, and required three-day time hours. Indeed, it was only to 11.00 that the second US defense line was overcome, thanks to the heroic attack on the 11th company reinforced of Lt. Florio on the right and "the contemporary onslaught, not expected and required, other units of the battalion who were arrested after a short distance from enemy fire" ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

In obtaining this success, however, the III/34th Inf. endured unusually heavy losses: the 10th company was almost entirely destroyed being left with only 34 men and without any officers, while the 9th company was halved in actual and could count on only one uninjured officer. At the same time was also mortally wounded Maj. Artigiani, commander of I/28th Art., Which supported by 8:00 with its fire the impetuous advance of this the left column. The American official report tells us with gruesome details of the massacre in this strike group of the Italian ranks, remembering, among other things, that "there were human bodies hanging from trees and some shredded" ⁽⁴⁷⁾.

Following the breakthrough performed so valiantly from III/34th Inf. "Livorno" and the concomitant progression of the three

(46) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B "Report on the battle in the plain of Gela (11-12 July 1943) in which took part the III Battalion of the 43rd Inf. Regiment, "Livorno", "p. 4.

(47) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p, 170

armored columns of the "H. Goering", the American troops landed on the perimeter of the beachhead at about 11:30 and sheltered in the village of Gela.

For its part, the III/34th Inf., exhausted and waiting for any although problematic replacements, had to stop at the roadblock at the outskirts of the city.

Meanwhile the right column of Col. Mona had come to at 11:00 the level crossing of Casa Femmina Morta, where he was stopped by the fire of the famous three Italian guns captured the day before by the American *Rangers*. Here the Mona column sought to know the outcome of the advance of the "H. Goering", which was then passed both Senia Ferrata along the coast, and Spinasantà on the road to Niscemi and both Case Aliotta and the Gela river⁽⁴⁸⁾. The Germans had also sent forty tanks to get around the city of Gela also from the west, on side of the "Livorno", but they were severely tested by naval fire, which - as we saw - had been aimed particularly at their armored units⁽⁴⁹⁾.

Ironically, precisely at 11:30 am, when the Americans withdrew into Gela, there was the "turning point" of the battle. By that fact in support of the US troops, without at that time the support ship, they began to intervene with tactical air strikes on immediately Italian-German rear, as well as some tanks from both sides of the beachhead, ie from Licata to the west and from Scoglitti to the southeast.

Just below the time of 11:30 in the Historical Diary XVI Corps bears the noted intervention from the west of enemy armor against the flank of the right column of Col. Mona⁽⁵⁰⁾. These were elements of the 30th battle group of the US 3rd Inf. Div. from Licata, whose dangerous counter maneuver was immediately perceived by Gen. Chirieleison, commander of the "Livorno". First, the latter then saw to defend the starting points of I/33rd Inf. and I/34th Inf. at Monte dell'Apa and at Monte Zai, as well as the same Butera station, base of departure of the flanking column of Lt. Col. Mastrangeli. The loss of these positions would in fact isolated the entire Mona column

(48) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 99 quater: "Report on the operations in this sector of the XVI Corps from day 10 to day 20 July 1943 ", p. 8.

(49) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 146.

(50) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 57.

pushed forward, since Gen. Chirieleison arranged to move at 12:45 a battery of the III/28th Art. in the saddle between Monte dell'Apa and Monte Zai⁽⁵¹⁾.

Now reduced to the defensive, Gen. Chirieleison doubled at 14:00 the number of batteries in the aforementioned saddle, sent on the Butera -Gela roadway a 81mm. mortar platoon, hijacked from the laggard II/34th Inf. the two installments of Monte S. Nicola and recalled the II/33rd Inf. the flanking column of Poggio Rabbito. Finally he settled on the III/33rd Inf., kept in reserve, on the general lines between Monte del Falcone and Poggio della Femmina⁽⁵²⁾.

At the same time were coming from the south east, that is from the sector of Scoglitti, 250 paratroopers of Col. Gavin and some elements of the 180th tactical group of the American 45th Inf. Div. These units, with some antitank weapon, harassing the flank and rear of the left-hand column of the "H. Goering" near Ponte Dirillo.

However it is not verifiable in any Italian official document, but it was definitely disproved by US sources, including the official report U. S. Army, the news that at about 11:30, just when the battle was about to turn in favor of the Americans, Gen. Patton would have issued the US 1st Inf. Div. the clear order to prepare for the re-embarkation message that would be intercepted by listening stations of the 6th Army⁽⁵³⁾. In US archives it exists instead an intercepted precisely at 11.30, written by Faldella, Chief of the G.S. of the 6th Army, and related to a request for reinforcements asked by Patton for the sector of Gela "*attacked by armored troops*", and it may be that this message of a different kind, enormously inflated, has been at the origin of the misunderstanding⁽⁵⁴⁾.

(51) A.U.S.E., folder 1506: " Commander Infantry Division 'Livorno': report on the attack on Gela (11 July 1943)", Annex 19: phonogram No. 12: 12:45 of July 11, 1943, directed from the Division Command to Commander of XVI Corps.

(52) *Ibid*, phonogram n. 14: 14:00 of "11 July 1943 directed from the Commander "Livorno" Div. to Commander XVI Corps.

(53) See. E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 148, taken from other authors of the period and inspired by some uncontrolled releases of protagonists. For a reasoned refutation of these interpretations see. U .S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 170, footnote 20, in addition to the previously mentioned volumes S.E. MORISON, Italian translation, p. 179, by H. POND on p. 150, of P. Maltese to p. 173, not to mention that neither Eisenhower nor Alexander cite to anything this episode in their reports on facts and Sicily.

(54) U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES: Collection of Italian military records, document EN 381.

At 14:00, the same time when Gen. Chirieleison emanated the second articulated measures to stop the enemy push from the west, the two armored columns of the center and right of the "H. Goering" had to stop their advance and go on the defensive, pressed by growing American units from Scoglitti. In the late afternoon, then, these two German columns were forced to undergo a counter attack of armored vehicles, which the Americans had finally made operational on the beaches of Gela, and to fall between Priolo Gargallo and Ponte Olivo with them effectively decimated.

Only the Panzer regiment continued fighting along the coastal railway to late evening; but at the end of the day arrived new orders from Gen. Rossi of 21:30 and had to also abandon the offensive at a time when - as we shall see - it was consuming the drama of the "Livorno" division ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

The right column of the latter division, headed by Col. Mona, units and sent to its coverage by Gen. Chirieleison began to be violently counterattacked in the early afternoon by the American *Rangers* who, crossing the Gattano stream, came up to km. 28 of the Butera - Gela roadway. At the same time a mechanized group of the U.S. 30th Inf. Regt. from Licatta, engaged the flanking II/33rd in the area of Manfria Bridge, forcing it to retreat. The Mona column was then encircled along the roadway and subjected to artillery fire and air strikes.

The resistance of the Mona column lasted until 15:30 when, failed the last attempt to break the encirclement, the survivors of the I/33rd Inf., including the command of Lt. Col. Alessi, had to surrender their weapons, and communicated this at the same time to Gen. Chirieleison ⁽⁵⁶⁾. With the same phonogram the commander of the "Livorno" admitted not knowing the fate of the other

(55) Orders of Gen. Rossi of 21:30, which we have already mentioned in the previous paragraph 3, prescribed that the "H. Goering" reached before the day of the 12th the junction Vizzini - Buccheri - Palazzolo Acreide, via Vittoria and Comiso, in view of a counter-attack on Syracuse, however, definitely lost. See, A.U.S.E. Folder 1427, annex 28: dispatch of the XVI C.A. Command n. 01/8203 / op of 21.30 on 11 July 1943.

(56) A.U.S.E., folder 1506, "Infantry Division 'Livorno' Command: on the attack report Gela (11 July 1943)", Annex 19: phonogram the sixteenth Command C.A. n. 15 of 15.30 on 11 July 1943

infantry battalion of the Mona column (the I/34th) and stated that, unless orders to the contrary, he ordered that the remains of the two columns employed toward Gela were to withdraw to their starting positions⁽⁵⁷⁾.

But these withdraw orders could only reach the remains of the left column, since even the I/34th Inf. was overwhelmed and its commander, Lt. Col. De Gregorio, was taken prisoner, together with survivors of the battalion, a hundred meters from the level crossing at Gela⁽⁵⁸⁾.

The left column, with the remains of the III/34th Inf. and the mobile unit "E", instead could break away and reach "at 17:45 km. 26 of roadway #117, maintaining close liaison with the right of the *H. Goering* division"⁽⁵⁹⁾. At 22:00 this column, deployed astride the roadway, rejected a first night of the counter attack of the 26th regimental tactical group of the U. S. 1st Inf. Div. and at midnight, under the orders of XVI Corps Command, resumed its march to the base of Mount Castelluccio⁽⁶⁰⁾.

To 02:30 on 12 July, however, also unleashed on the latter position the attack of the usual American 26th battle group, which lasted until 07:00, when the position fell and the entire left column was annihilated or captured, except the I/28th Art., the mortar company and the headquarters of the 34th Inf., sent to the Gigliotto junction⁽⁶¹⁾. Among the prisoners there was the Lt. Col. Leonardi, commander of the III/34th Inf., who had led the attack column of Gela.

With the fall of Monte Castelluccio and the retreat of the "H. Goering" was easy for the American 26th regimental tactical group to seize the Ponte Olivo airport at 07:20. Meanwhile, the positions of Monte dell'Apa and Monte Zai, the starting point of the now destroyed right column of Col. Mona and

(57) *Ibid.*

(58) A.U.S.E., folder 1506, the aforementioned report on the attack of Gela, phonogram Command div. fr. "Livorno" to Command XVI C.A. n. 18 of 11 July 1943 at 20.10.

(59) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 65.

(60) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, Annex 26: phonogram the sixteenth Command C.A. n. 01/8200 / op of 11 July 1943.

(61) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the fight of the Gela plain (11-12 July 1943) which took part in the III Battalion of the 34th Regiment. fr. "Livorno". " p. 6-7

defended only by the 11th company of the III/33rd Inf., who had been conquered by the US Rangers at first light on 12 July ⁽⁶²⁾.

* * *

There is no doubt that the failure of the brave and unfortunate Italian-German counterattack on Gela—which according to some critics should not have even attempted—it was mainly due to the unexpected effectiveness of naval fire, which, according to the American historian Morison, was demonstrated in effects fully for the first time also against several US experts, up to that time very skeptical about it ⁽⁶³⁾.

The naval bombardment against Italian-German positions had to confront the initial inaction in the field of American tactical aircraft, armored vehicles and anti-tank guns, and stopped around 11:30 am, resumed in the early afternoon, when these other Americans instruments of war had intervened to counter attack the enemy, now in retreat almost everywhere.

For example at 13:16 the destroyer *Butler* fired 48 shells on a concentration of German tanks currently being reorganized after the morning effort. The cruiser *Boise* targeted objectives in the afternoon around Ponte Olivo and terminated its activity on the 11th with some prejudice on the roadway to Niscemi. The sister *Savannah* again opened fire at 16:21 against the Gela-Butera roadway. Finally the destroyer *Glennon* closed the daily round of naval fire at 20:57 after firing 165 shots in support of the U.S. 16th Regimental Tactical Group on the right flank.

The decisive effectiveness of the US Naval shooting in front of Gela was also recognized in all the reports of the protagonists of the Italian-German counterattack on 11 July, which were against mostly very critical of the absolute lack of any contrast from part of the Royal Italian Navy in those waters.

The Italian-German losses were staggering. In particular the consistency of the individual battalions of the "Livorno" at the end

(62) A.U.S.E., folder 1506: "Report on the activities of operational tactical group Bruni (III/33rd Inf. "Livorno")", P. 2.

(63) S.E. MORISON: History of U.S., naval operations in world war II, vol. IX cit., Italian translation by the S.M.E., p 178 and pp. 183-184

of the day of the 11th was as follows ⁽⁶⁴⁾:

- I/33rd: 400 men (captured)
- II/33rd: about 120 men
- III/33rd: 700 men
- I/34th about 500 men (captured)
- II/34th: intact
- III/34th: about 400 men (captured).

Instead the 28th Art. Regiment was still intact, except for a 100/17 gun hit directly,

Killed, wounded, prisoners and missing the entire division, "Livorno" was calculated the figure of 214 officers and about 7, 000 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men on staff elements of 11,400.

The German "H. Goering" armored division fell 30 officers and 600 non-commissioned officers and military troops on a actual 8739, while of 99 tanks then provided and all employed there was knocked out 43⁽⁶⁵⁾. However, the "H. Goering", despite the known order of 21:30 of Gen. Rossi reaching for the 12th the Vizzini - Buccheri - Palazzolo Acreide line, lingered in the battlefield area during the night, precisely in order to recover the greatest possible number of damaged and repairable armored vehicles ⁽⁶⁶⁾. Accomplished this work, the German armored division, as we shall see in the next chapter, lingered further in the Gela area stubbornly to renew his attacks during July 12 and this was achieved in the day as new orders of Gen. Guzzoni.

6. THE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE ON LICATA (see. chart n. 14)

As we saw in Chapter VI, dealing with the reaction of the 207th Coastal Division during July 10, Gen. Arisio, commander of the XII Army Corps, had ordered that at dawn

(64) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 99 quater: "Report on the operations in this sector of the XVI Corps from 10 to. July 20, 1943", p. 9.

(65) B.L. MONTGOMERY: *Da El Alamein al fiume Sangro*, op. cit., p. 127; S. ATTANASIO: *Sicilia senza Italia, luglio-agosto 1943*, op. cit., p. 120 and N. VICINO: *La battaglia di Gela*, op. cit., p. 4).

(66) A.U.S.E., 2124 / B folder, file 2124 / A "Report of the Command FF.AA of Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943". p. 45.

of the 11th was made a decisive counter-attack against the bridgehead of the American 3rd Inf. Div. at Licata, starting from Campobello di Licata to the north of Naro to the northwest and Favara - Masseria Giudice to the west.

The first strike group to move at 05:40 hours of July 11 was that of Col. Venturi departing from Campobello di Licata and formed by the Command of the 177th Bersaglieri Regiment and by the DXXVI Bersaglieri Battalion, and by the CLXI Art. group with eight 90/53 Smoventi and the 1st Motorized Machine gun company. The American 3rd Inf. Div., however, he prevented the Italian counter attack and pointed itself on Campobello di Licata along the roadway #123, pushing on the village of Case Musta mechanized elements of the III Rangers Battalion and the II/15th Inf. who first engaged a fierce battle with the CLXI Smoventi group⁽⁶⁷⁾.

During this fighting fell mortally wounded in a air strike, while performing an inspection on site, Gen. Francisci, liaison officer between the Command of the 6th Army and units of the militia, designated at 07:15 to take command of the troops in the Campobello Campobello di Licata - Canicattì area⁽⁶⁸⁾. Were also destroyed three Smoventi and caused large voids in the ranks of the DXXVI Bersaglieri Battalion of Maj. Maritati and the Motorized Machine gun company. At the same time Col. Venturi was wounded, but returned to his Command post after summary dressings.

In the following three hours of fighting, including attacks and counterattacks with the objective to hold Favarotta, the Venturi battle group was forced to withdraw from Case Musta at 09:05, then abandoning to the enemy also Campobello di Licara and coming in at noon in the area of S. Silvestro, about four kilometers south of Canicattì⁽⁶⁹⁾.

To reinforce this new alignment of the XII Corps the Commander put at the disposal of Col. Venturi also

(67) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps." P. 13 and Annex 25, See. Also in the same folder: "Report on the feats of arms supported by the 207th Coastal Division on July 10 and from the tactical grouping of Gen. Schreiber from day 11 to day 21 July 1943". P. 3.

(68) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps." Pg. 14: 07.15 hours from 11 July 1943.

(69) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder: "Report on the feats of arms supported by the 207th Coastal Division on July 21, 1943". P. 4, and "Historical Military Diary of XII Corps." P. 18.

the CLXIII 90/53 Smoventi group and the 1st and 3rd battery of the XXII Art. group of 105/28. Arrived on site at 11:30 then Gen. Schreiber, commander of the 207th Coastal Div., who, after the death of Gen. Francisci, was sent at 09:20 in order to take command of the forces involved in the Canicattì area, as well as the nearby German "Neapel" group of Col. Geisler), Guzzoni put available to the XII Corps at 08:10 hours ⁽⁷⁰⁾. This German battle group, stationing at S. Cataldo, belonged to the 15th "Sizilien" Div. and was composed by the 215th Tank Company with fifteen tanks and a mortar battalion and accompanying weapons withdrawn from the "Fullriede" Regt. The Command of the 207th Coastal Div. was instead given from that moment to Gen. De Laurentis, former commander of the "Assietta" infantry division, who is then brought to Agrigento ⁽⁷¹⁾.

Also at 8:10 came the order of Guzzoni to transfer to Canicattì, to become part of this strong regimental group of Gen. Schreiber, the truck carried III/30th Inf. of the "Assietta" Div., the CCXXXIII Art. Group of 75/27 with mechanical tow (who were in Chiusa Sclafani) and truck carried II/6th Inf. of the "Aosta" Div., along with 28th Anti-tank co. ⁽⁷²⁾. Finally at 9:45, and at 09:55 the XIX Art. Group of 105/28 and motorized machine gun company of the 208th Coast Div. were ordered to join said tactical grouping ⁽⁷³⁾.

The purpose of such a massing of troops around Canicattì under the command of Gen. Schreiber was twofold: on the afternoon of July 11 to launch a second attack on the roadway #123 for Licata and protect the flank of the adjacent XVI Corps.

The new counter-offensive in snapped effects to 13:30, but the only ones to advance were the 15 tanks of the German "Neapel" group, which broke through the lines of the American 15th Tactical Group, past Campobello di Licata and came about two kilometers south of this village ⁽⁷⁴⁾. Here they were counterattacked

(70) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps," pp. 14-15: 08:10 and 09:20 hours on 11 July 1973.

(71) *Ibid*, p. 15

(72) *Ibid*, p. 14 hours 11 July 1943 08:10

(73) *Ibid*, p. 146 hours of 09:45 and 09:55 of July 11, 1943 and Annex 29

(74) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Report on the feats of arms supported by the 207th Coastal Division on July 10 and from the tactical grouping of Gen. Schreiber from day 11 to day 21 July 1943", p. 5

by American armored units and forced to fall back south of Canicattì. Gen. Schreiber, then, noting that the enemy was too well entrenched around Campobello di Licata, refrained from sending in place some Italian infantry contingent and decided to collect all of his units back around S- Silvestro (75)

* * *

Meanwhile, in the direction of Palma di Montechiaro, it began the counter-offensive of the DXXVII Bersaglieri Bn. joined from Favara, and moved from Masseria Giudice. This battalion had been reinforced for the occasion by the first platoon 1st Motorized Machine Gun co. and was supported by the 2nd Bty. 105/28 of the XXII group. These units clashed during the morning and early afternoon of the 11th with the American III/7th Regimental tactical group is within the town of Palma di Montechiaro, both on the surrounding heights, until the fighting ceased at 15:30 with the US having the upper hand. By that fact, the Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps bears a note that the DXXVII Bersaglieri Battalion had exceeded the passage one kilometer to the west of Palma and had penetrated up to an area, where "lagging in sporadic fighting was surrounded and captured by the enemy" (76).

The battery of the XXII Art. Group which remained was almost totally destroyed by air strikes along the coastal road #115, while the XII Corps Command complained that repeated requests for protection from the riots sky in the morning were not met by the Royal Air Force due to various operational and bureaucratic difficulties (77).

In this area it was then formed a resistance line on the banks of the Naro river, manned by LXXIII Battalion of the 10th Bersaglieri Regiment who, as is known, had been made available to the 207th Coast Div. the night before (see Chapter VI, paragraph 7).

* * *

The last planned counter-offensive in the area of Licata in the day of 11 July would have had to start from the village of Naro,

(75) *Ibid*, p. 5

(76) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps." pp, 16:17: 15:30 of 11 July 1943.

(77) *Ibid*, p. 17 and Annex 31.

directed also on Palma di Montechiaro, simultaneously morning counterattack of Col. Venturi along the roadway #123. This offensive had to be postponed until the afternoon, however, because of the late arrival at Agrigento and at Castrofilippo near Naro of the XXXV Battalion of the 10th Motorized Bersaglieri Regiment and 12th Battery of 75/27 of the CIII Art. Group, put. also at the disposal of the 207th Coastal Div. the night before ⁽⁷⁸⁾.

Meanwhile Naro had been occupied by a battalion of the American 41st Armored Regiment that came into town at midday, had pushed his vanguard on the roadway to Canicattì. Therefore, when the XXXV Bersaglieri Battalion of Maj. Moccia was ready to move to the attack (13:30) its action was limited to occupy the high ground three kilometers north of the same Naro, that still temporarily interrupted the enemy advance beyond the village.

The next American counterattack, supported by tactical aircraft, was rejected at 16:00 by the battalion, while declining significantly in numbers, then with a leap forward of the last two platoons of reinforcement he repulsed the enemy to the outskirts of Naro. But overnight the Bersaglieri were forced to abandon the too exposed positions temporarily retaken and the US 41st Armored Regiment resumed the advance towards Canicattì ⁽⁷⁹⁾.

* * *

The strong deployment of Gen. Schreiber in the S. Silvestro, four kilometers south of Canicattì, began to be attacked by the American 15th Regimental tactical group starting from 18:00, while planes were bombing the village. In this circumstance a few enemy armored vehicles trying to reach the town were arrested by the fire of 90/53 Semoventi promptly deployed on the southern outskirts. Other mechanized units of the US 30th battle group they were already instead diverted by General Truscott to the beaches of Gela, where

(78) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Report on the feats of arms supported by the 207th Coastal Division on July 10 and by the tactical grouping of Gen. Schreiber from day 11 to day 21 July 1943", p. 4 and annexes 14 and 16.

(79) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 194-195.

- as we have seen - effectively they contributed to the last phase of operations on 11 July in that area.

At 20:00 Gen. Schreiber presented himself to Lt. Col. Fullriede, commander of the 129th Grenadiers Regiment of the 15th Div. "Sizilien", who told him that he had absorbed the "Neapel" group, taking command of all German troops in the field, and to place themselves under his authority ⁽⁸⁰⁾.

Soon Commands of the Army and Army Corps wove conflicting opinions on the future course of action in the sector. Indeed at 22:00 Gen. Arisio communicated to Gen. Guzzoni that at the dawn of July 12, the "Schreiber" group would develop a new offensive, with all the Italian-German troops available, in the direction of Licata ⁽⁸¹⁾. At 23:10 instead of the commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily ordered Arisio to "contain the enemy pressure rather than attempt counter attacks, given the inadequacy of the available forces" ⁽⁸²⁾. Consequently, the XII Corps Command ordered Gen. Schreiber to "maintain Canicattì to prevent further enemy progress and to refrain from disproportionate attacks on his own on the enemy forces" ⁽⁸³⁾.

The defensive attitude in that field then sprang from an independent conviction of Gen. Guzzoni and not gained in the context of XII Corps for maneuvers and pressures, including German ones, as has been speculated somewhere.

In any event, from 22:25 the bridge over the river Naro at Masseria Giudice had been blown up, while Gen. Schreiber, convinced of the danger of circumvention of Canicattì from the west, procured permission from Guzzoni for a night withdraw of his whole command to a position north of the town ⁽⁸⁴⁾.

The abandonment of Canicattì by the group "Schreiber", which put a definitive end to the dilemma whether to launch or not

(80) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder: "Report on the feats of Arms supported by the 207th Coastal Division on July 10 and from the tactical grouping of Gen. Schreiber from day 11 to day 21 July 1943", p. 5.

(81) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps, 22.00 of; July 11, 1943"

(82) *Ibid*, 23:10 hours; July 11, 1943

(83) *Ibid*, 23:10 hours; July 11, 1943

(84) *Ibid*, p. 21

another offensive towards Licata, was carried out under constant pressure of the enemy, in whose hands fell the third 105/28 bty. located in Serralunga, on the road to Naro. Instead the tenacious XXXV Bersaglieri Battalion, remained isolated north of the later town, was ordered to fall back on Castrofilippo.

7. THE END OF RESISTANCE OF THE 206th COASTAL DIVISION (See Map n. 11)

While was developed counter attacks of July 11 in the areas of Augusta-Syracuse, Gela and Licata, which also consumes in the drama the survivors of the 206th Coastal Division of Gen. d'Havet.

In the stronghold of Bonivini-Modica of Maj. Argenziano resisted all night of the 10th with the remains of his mobile group "F" to the repeated assaults of paratroopers and the vanguards of the Scottish 51st Inf. Div. Finally at 05:30 of July 11 loomed the decisive enemy attack, with wide deployment of armored vehicles protected by smoke screens ⁽⁸⁵⁾. At 08:00 British tanks, which had expanded on the left, threatened to bypass the stronghold, which was then evacuated by the defenders, withdrew with the remaining vehicle in the direction of Rosolini and Modica.

Because of damage to some trucks in the rear, the retreating column is divided into two parts, one of which went on beyond Caltagirone and the other, with Maj. Argenziano, took a defense position at the crossroads of La Sorda, to the south of Modica, supported in this by subsequent orders of Gen. d'Havet and the sudden enemy occupation of Rosolini occurred at 11:30 am ⁽⁸⁶⁾.

In Modica, home to the Division Command, had withdrawn during the night between 10 and 11 July, as we have seen, even tactical group "South" of the Console Busalacchi while to Ispica had arrived Col. D'Apollonius with the Command of the 122nd Coastal Regiment and Scicli was allocated the Command of the 123rd Coastal Regiment of Col. Primavera.

It was thus closed in the morning of the 11th the British circle

(85) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attachment 59/12 "Report on the military operations carried out by mobile group "F" stationed in Rosolini."

(86) *Ibid*

around the triangle Ispica-Modica-Scicli, while behind him the 157th Regimental Tactical Group of the American 45th Inf. Div. occupied Comiso and Ragusa. Among other things the important airport of Comiso was captured by the Americans with as many as 125 aircraft and 200,000 gallons of fuel ⁽⁸⁷⁾.

Informed by excited and uncontrolled sources of the advance of British armored columns from Noto, Rosolini and Ispica in the early morning of the 11th, Gen. d'Havet had been given freedom "to leave home the many officers having family in Modica", but they refused, and at 09:45 he had ordered to destroy the secret documents and hand over the keys to the locals of Podesta of the food and fuel stores, being located inside the town, could not be destroyed ⁽⁸⁸⁾. Finally he had drawn up to 09:55 the following message in four copies, sent by means of as many pigeons to Gen. Rossi, commander of the XVI Army Corps:

"I assure V.E. that the 206th Division has done its duty by arresting and containing the enemy as long as possible and that has only yielded in front of the vast superiority of arms & means.

Infantry countered the advance, resisted and fought back. Gunners fired to the end and defended the pieces with hand grenades.

The division headquarters, already bypassed, is about to be overwhelmed" ⁽⁸⁹⁾.

The fall of Modica, reputed so imminent and painted in strong colors as well, did not occur instead ends at 11:07 the following day, July 12, while the same Ispica, most advanced and exposed and where was barricaded Col. D'Apollonio, it fell at 15:00 on the 11th, as was reported to Gen. d'Havet, but at noon on the 12th by the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. ⁽⁹⁰⁾.

The events in Modica in fact took place as follows. At the dawn of the 12th the vanguard of the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. attacked the stronghold of La Sorda defended by Maj. Argenziano, however, being blocked by mortar fire and artillery. The

(87) M. Blumenson: *Sicily: Whose victory ?*, op. cit., p. 67.

(88) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attachment 59/6: "Report on the conduct of the operations 206th. coastal division", p. 8.

(89) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the conduct of the 206th Coastal Division operations", p. 19

(90) A.U.S.E., folder annexed 59/7 "Report events of 122nd Coast Inf. Regt."

Canadians renewed the attack at 10:00 and, after an hour and a half, swept the remains of the mobile unit "F" and captured the same Maj. Argenziano ⁽⁹¹⁾.

In that moment Gen. d'Havet was a prisoner for twenty minutes. He on the morning of the 12th had inspected lower Modica, where he had given orders "to withdraw all the sheets, such as white flags, were exposed to balconies and windows" ⁽⁹²⁾. So, back in the seat of his command, had tried in vain to get in touch with the unit of Col. Primavera in Scicli, who was in turn overpowered and captured at 11:00 hours ⁽⁹³⁾. Seven minutes later, according to the testimony of Col. of Art. Escalar, commander of the 44th Regimental Group, the full command of the 206th Coastal Div., including Gen. d'Havet, became a prisoner of Canadians ⁽⁹⁴⁾.

Of precise and insistent request of the Gen. d'Havet the enemy authorized him to retain possession of his duty pistol, which "mark of honor for the whole division" ⁽⁹⁵⁾. then invited to the cafeteria by Gen. Leese and by Adm. Lord Mountbatten, Gen. d'Havet was heard asking insistently by his British captors "why the Italian Air Force and Navy had not been seen" ⁽⁹⁶⁾.

Around noon also Consul Busalacchi, commander of Tactical Group "South" was captured on the road between Modica and Scicli ⁽⁹⁷⁾.

The remaining Regimental Command of the 206th Coastal Div., namely that of 146th Regt. of Col. Cancellara, managed instead to evade capture. Noto abandoned on the afternoon of July 10, this command reached Palazzolo Acreide at 08:00 of the 11th with mixed elements of the 437th Battalion, the CCXXX 47/32 Semoventi Battalion of Maj. Elena and the Corps of Engineers. Instead joined the CCXXIV

(91) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annexed 59/12 "Report on the military operations carried out by mobile group "F" stationed in Rosolini."

(92) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attached 59/6, "Report on the conduct of the 206th Coastal Division operations"

(93) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attached 59/8, "Report of the 123rd regiment sector Scicli."

(94) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annexed 59/10, "Report of the artillery of Colonel Romeo Escalar"

(95) A.U.S.E., folder 2124 / B "Report of Gen. d'Havet on December 1, 1945", p. 22

(96) *Ibid*, p. 23.

(97) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annexed 59/11 "Report on the use of the Battle Group South"

Art. Group continued the retreat to Vizzini, passing a checkpoint at the junction of the Mulino, near where fell in battle the commander of the group, Maj. Mambrini ⁽⁹⁸⁾.

Considering that at Palazzolo Acreide, destroyed by bombing and abandoned by the people, it was not possible any concrete defense, Col. Cancellara moved on July 11 the rest of his column to Vizzini. Here he learned that the enemy had already come to Modica and the same command of the "Napoli" Inf. Div. was about to withdraw from Vizzini to Caltagirone. This town became thus the new destination of the remains of the 146th Coastal Regiment and arrived on the night between 11 and July 12.

At Caltagirone the column of Col. Cancellara was dismembered on the 12th by the orders of the XVI Corp Command, the infantry elements were sent to the area of Vizzini to be available to Gen. Fiumara, vice commander of the "Napoli" Div. The artillery units and the Engineers were absorbed instead by the command of the XVI Corps, while the remains of CCXXX 47/32 Semoventi Battalion of Maj. Elena were absorbed by the 131st Tank Regiment, and then they were used on roadway #117 from Piazza Armerina to Gela, and precisely at the Gigliotto junction, where the latter officer was killed on the 15th, as we shall see in the next chapter.

On July 13, having traced the command of Gen. Fiumara to Vizzini, Col. Cancellara with two company formations of his 146th Regiment joined the German machine gun unit, claimed four hours of fighting at the Licodia Evia station and retired first on Mineo and then, the following day, on Ramacca. Finally, on July 15 the thinned unit of Col. Cancellara, while on the Adrano-Bronte Road, he was order to pass to the employ of the 213th Coastal Div. in Lingfield ⁽⁹⁹⁾.

8. COMMAND DECISIONS OF THE ARMY AND THE CORPS TO THE END OF 11 JULY

We already know of the decision taken by Gen. Guzzoni at 07:45 and repeated at 10:30 on 11 July to divert the

(98) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attached 59/9, "Report of the 146th Coastal Regiment".

(99). *Ibid.*

"H. Goering " Armored Div. towards Vittoria and Syracuse, once it obtained a success in Gela. and at the same time to deflect the "Livorno" from Gela towards Licata. Then at 17:30, despite the unfavorable development of the counter-offensive of Gela, the commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily reiterated to Gen. Rossi that the "H. Goering" was to make the "maximum efforts in order to be on the 12th in a position to contain the advance of enemy troops from Syracuse and from Avola" ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾.

This paramount concern of Gen. Guzzoni about the fate of the Augusta - Syracuse naval base sector was moreover shared the same afternoon by the GS/RE, according to which "the first major and most urgent objective should be to contain the enemy could landing in the Augusta-Syracuse area, especially by preventing its spread towards the plain of Catarlia". The GS/RE with the occasional communications that it would interest the "Supermarina and the Superaereo because they gave massive aid to the terrestrial actions and that it was examining the possibility of transferring the island another Germanic division" ⁽¹⁰¹⁾.

Unfortunately, the increasingly poor performance of the fighting front of Gela and recent news about the enemy control of the Vittoria area, threatened to frustrate the project of Guzzoni towards both the "H. Goering ", and the "Livorno". The commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily expressed then at 18:20 the GS/RE. no longer plans to employ against Syracuse the "H. Goering ", but the 15th "Sizilien" Div., whose "Ens" group was in the course of transfer from the island's west to the center ⁽¹⁰²⁾. But even this project was soon frustrated by unfavorable news coming from the Licata sector, which is why the 15th German Division was oriented to work in that direction, giving up the distant episode of Syracuse ⁽¹⁰³⁾.

At 21:00 therefore Gen. Guzzoni, as we have seen, he returned to propose the "H. Goering" as a means of buffering, after Gela, even the outlets to Vittoria - Comiso and Avola

(100) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A: "Report of the FF.AA Command of Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 27.

(101) *Ibid*, p. 27. As you will see, "the other Germanic division sent to Sicily was the 29th *Panzer*, preceded the 12th on the island since the launch of two regiments of German paratroopers.

(102) *Ibid*, p. 27.

(103) *Ibid*, p. 28.

Syracuse, by issuing the well-known order 16362/op to the XVI Corps Command⁽¹⁰⁴⁾.

Consequently Gen. Rossi arranged at 21:30 that the "H. Goering" reached within the day of the 12th the combination Vilzini -Buccheri -Palazzolo Acreide, to be ready to a counterattack on Syracuse, in order to send out later. The German armored division was also expected to sweep in passing the Victoria and Comiso area, while a Inf. Battalion and a battery of the "Livorno" would replace the elements of the "H. Goering" itself at Case Priolo⁽¹⁰⁵⁾. This is to not let the enemy opened an infiltration corridor between Gela -Scoglitti and the inland, which in effect could have cut Sicily in two and isolate the two Italian Army Corps. As we mentioned, and as we shall see later, the "H. Goering" instead lingered longer than expected in the Gela area both to recover as many of its damaged tanks, and to stubbornly renew tomorrow's local counter-offensive, and here it was joined by new and changed orders of Guzzoni at 09:10 hours.

In the sector of the XII Corps the most important measure of the evening of the 11th was the one adopted by Gen. Guzzoni, who ordered to Gen. Arisio to arrange the urgent transfer to the west of Catania, with trains and vehicles, one of his two divisions "Aosta" or "Assietta", which would follow the movement of the two Inf. Battalions sent to Canicattì help of Gen. Schreiber. Guzzoni suggested to move about in the meantime for the ordinary way the "Assietta" Inf. Div. from Partanna area to the south east, to prevent threats from the Agrigento sector could take place undisturbed "to the north and northeast"⁽¹⁰⁶⁾, then we will see in section 8 of the next chapter the development of these controversial orders.

For his part the commander of the XII Corps of the Army noted in his Historical Journal at the end of the day of the 11th that, while they had distinguished themselves in their sector of the troops of the 10th Bersaglieri Regiment and

(104) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, attachment 27: Report of the FF.AA Command of Sicily n. 16362 / op of 21:00 on 11 July 1943.

(105) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 28: dispatch of the XVI Corp Command n. 01/8203 / op of 21:30 on 11 July 1943

(106) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A: "Report of the Command FF.AA of Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 28.

the 12th Battery of the CIII Art. Group, were nevertheless some defections occurred in the unit of the 17th CC.NN Legion of the “Assietta” Division not yet engaged in combat ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾.

(107) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps.", P. 21.

CHAPTER IX

THE PHASE OF CONTAINMENT (July 12-16)

1. SENDING GERMANS REINFORCEMENTS TO SICILY AND THE DISSATISFACTION IN BERLIN AND ROME (See. Map n. 20)

On the morning of July 12, Gen. Roatta, Chief of G. S. of the R. Army and former commander of the 6th Army in Sicily, sent to the Comando Supremo of the hand written memo n. 1017 S. with which summed up the military situation on the island, announcing the sending of reinforcements, and examined the burning air-naval issue ⁽¹⁾. In this latter regard the reminder had this to say:

"We need to consider:

- because of our naval & aerial inferiority, the opponent can without serious difficulty, increase troops landed through drawing and sending from the known large reservoir of French North Africa & maybe even pour convoys directly from the Atlantic:

- if our air and naval offense remains in current limit, said enhancement will -as amount & pace – much higher at the expansion to which we can give to Sicily:

- Therefore, at some point - it could be forthcoming - & the situation if it were not first restored balance would be broken to our disadvantage;

- Similar circumstances could then be reproduced for Sardinia and Corsica, and being the case it is *essential* that our aerial enhancement contrast the influx of enemy troops, to an extent at least as to avoid breaking the above balance. Since the Italian side this enhancement is impossible, it can not be implemented but by the Germans.

(1) A.U.S.E., folder 012, file 4: Hand of the telex S.M.R.E. n. S. 1017 of 12 July 1943.

The stakes of the game is such that his moral reflections and materials, which should make every effort to resolve it in our favor; effort that can not possibly be limited to the terrestrial reinforcement, but that has to be reflected in the maximum aerial reinforcement. Gen. Roatta. "

Following this memo, Gen. Ambrosio hastened to ask the same day Kesselring "the immediate deployment of adequate reinforcements," not quantified, but that would have remained in Italy allegedly "only a few days, because they could be withdrawn as the situation is defined in Sicily" ⁽²⁾.

The appeal of the Supreme Command to Kesselring was accompanied during the night by a personal letter from Mussolini to Hitler, through Gen. Marras, Italian military attaché in Berlin, where the request for provisional German reinforcements to Sicily, mainly aircraft, was advocated with heat ⁽³⁾.

The Führer replied on 13 July, stating that sending aerial units was already in progress, but not failing to point out that the increased Air Force task was due "to the unexpected rapid disintegration of the forces used in the coastal defense, which in one of the most important sectors have not even accepted the fight" ⁽⁴⁾.

Kesselring also in that same July 12, going with von Senger to visit the Sicilian front of and to attend at 18:10 the spectacular launch of the first wave of 1,400 German paratroopers of the 1st Division to the south of Catania, He expressed a negative opinion on what he called "the complete disorientation of the Italian divisions and deficiencies of Command" ⁽⁵⁾.

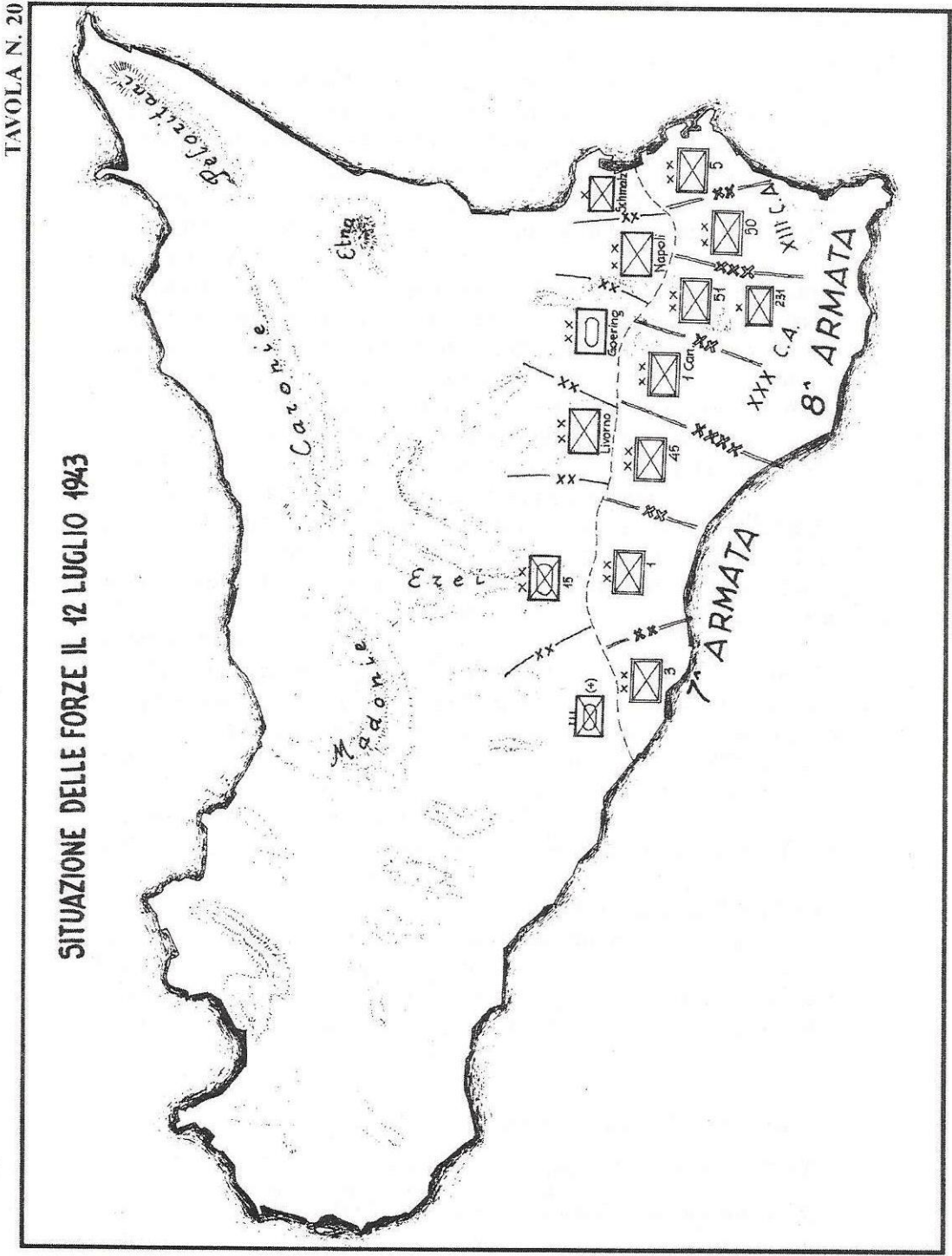
(2) *Ibid*, message of the Comando Supremo No. 51488/op of 12 July 1943.

(3) A.U.S.E., folder 1501, "Historical Journal of the Comando Supremo, Annex 585: Post 51505 / op of 22:40 hours of July 12, 1943.

(4) AUSE, folder 2124 / B: "Letters exchanged between Hitler and Mussolini about the defense of Sicily" and folder 1502, "Historical Journal of the Comando Supremo, Annex 820. The statements of Hitler about the collapse and failure contrast of some coastal defenses in one of the most important areas of Sicily - Chiara allusion to the facts of Augusta-Syracuse - that were contested by Mussolini on July 16 in a very resentful letter, although, as we shall see, the leader, intimately convinced by these and from other similar versions of facts could not help from sending 14 July two dry note to Gen. Guzzioni and Comando Supremo, reported both later in this same paragraph.

(5) A. KESSELRING: *Memorie di guerra*, op. cit., p. 171. The first wave of German paratroopers included the 3rd Regiment. Col. Heilmann while the second wave, which was launched at 20:30 of that same July 12, including the 4th Regiment of Lt. Col Walther

STATUS OF FORCES ON 12 JULY 1943



The apex of the contrasts between Italian and German about the Sicilian countryside was however not yet achieved and in those early days of the invasion, apart from the growing complaints of Berlin at the continued passivity of the Italian fleet, and the above mentioned land surprises, the European Axis leaders tried to do their best to place before the enemy the strongest obstacle possible.

On the operational level, however continued to be incurable, the disproportion of the enemy air forces as a result of heavy Anglo-American bombing on the nearest airports to the front. Just think about that between 10 and 22 July there had destroyed on the ground 118 Germans aircraft and 50 Italian. In the same period the 2nd Luftflotte lost 273 aircraft in combat and the R. Air Force 115, while, as, has been mentioned, as many as 125 aircraft fell into the hands of the Americans at Comiso.

The very high air losses encountered on the ground irritated the Germans and Hitler himself, that in his abovementioned letter of 13 July he complained to Mussolini also of deficient organization of the airport, especially with regard to decentralization areas and equipment of quick intervention ⁽⁶⁾.

Despite these complaints Hitler kept his promises of 13 July and, to strengthen the defenses of Sicily, he came to even change his strategy on the Eastern Front. In Russia had in fact started on July 5 the operation ZITADELLE, consisting of a massive and thwarted German offensive against the Kursk salient, the Führer decided to curb his July 13, ordering his generals to get ready to transfer shares in the Mediterranean ⁽⁷⁾.

Therefore, after the launch remembered south of Catania of the 3rd and 4th Paratroopers Regiment and the simultaneous arrival on the island of the II Battalion of the 382nd Panzergrenadier Regiment, deployed alongside of the "H. Goering" ⁽⁸⁾, on the 14th was moved from southern Italy to Sicily the XIV Armored Army Corps Command of Gen.

(6) A.U.S.E., 2124 folder: "Letters exchanged between Hitler and Mussolini about the defense of Sicily"
Hilter's letter of 13 July 1943.

(7) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. cit., p. 69 and U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 213.

(8) F.M. SENGHER und ETIERLIN: *Combattere senza paura e senza speranza*, op. cit., p. 232.

Hube, who would assume the direction of all German troops stationed on the island ⁽⁹⁾.

So on July 15 they began the movement to Sicily of the 29th Panzergrenadier Div. of Gen. Fries and began to arrive in the Straits of Messina Germanic heavy anti-aircraft. Finally the promised aerial reinforcements sent in those days consisted of torpedo bombers of KG. 26, of the bombers of II/KG. 76, II/LG. 1 and II and III KG.100, the assault aircraft of I/SKG.10 and fighters of III/JG. 27 ⁽¹⁰⁾.

The movement of the 29th Panzergrenadier Div. was slowed down in the following days not only by growing suspicions of Hitler about the upcoming turn about of the Italians, but also known by the Cuzzoni intentions to urgently withdraw all his deployments to the north-eastern tip of Sicily, as we shall see in the last paragraph of this chapter. The inflow in the island of the German 29th Division, however, was taken without reservations. On 18 July, before the meeting of Feltre between the two dictators and following a precise new order of the Führer ⁽¹¹⁾. However, the first battalion of the 29th Panzergrenadier Div. arrived in Sicily, as the vanguard, on July 15 and was immediately deployed alongside the "H. Goering" ⁽¹²⁾.

Hitler simultaneously imparts new orders to Kesselring and Hube. The first he asked to slow down as much as possible the enemy, then forcing him to stop a last resort, on the line S. Stefano di Camastra - Catania, while the second ordered to act in close cooperation with Gen. Senger und Etterlin, liaison officer with the Italian 6th Army, in order to gradually take over all Italian -German military operations in Sicily ⁽¹³⁾.

The same Kesselring, in an interview on 13 July with Mussolini and Ambrosio at Palazzo Venezia, confirmed to the Duce the German intention to "keep the island even in part," and told the

(9) A.U.S.E., folder 2266: "Considerations on the Italian campaign. 1943-1944 Col. Bogislav von Bonin, Chief of S.M. XIV C.A. German in Sicily. " Pp. 11-12

(10) A. Santoni -F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, op. cit., p. 427 note.

(11) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V. cited. p. 91.

(12) A.U.S.E., folder 2124 / B: file 2124 / A: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 15 June 1943 to 20 July 1943", pp. 38-39.

(13) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. cit., p. 69

strange and perhaps misinterpreted opinion of Guzzoni that the expected reinforcements to Sicily would still come too late and that therefore they could "be used better elsewhere" ⁽¹⁴⁾.

The exposed German idea of reducing "at a later time," the Sicilian defense perimeter line to S. Stefano di Camastra - Catania was however contested by Gen. Ambrosio in a new meeting with Kesselring held in that same July 13 in the Supreme Command headquarters. Ambrosio occasion admitted that Gen. Guzzoni - as we shall see in the last section of this chapter - he wanted to already begin the withdrawal on that line, but he had not been authorized to do so in view of the mass of still deployed troops to west (divisions "Aosta" and "Assietta") ⁽¹⁵⁾. For the Supreme Command was ultimately still "absolutely necessary to keep the current line as long as possible" ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Despite the self-confidence performed in front of Kesselring, Gen. Ambrosio presented to Mussolini, on that same July 13, one indeed daunting, in which the fate of Sicily was considered "marked more or less short-term" because of "absolute deficiency of a naval opposition and weak air opposition" and of "inadequacy of armament and placement of our coastal divisions, the scarcity and lack of robustness of the defense works, the lack of efficiency of the reserve divisions" ⁽¹⁷⁾.

For his part, Mussolini, oppressed by repeated German protests from content of the Ambrosio reminders and other reports about cases of poor resistance in Sicily, responded with two dry personal notes. The first was sent to Gen. Guzzoni by the Supreme Command and the G.S.R.E. with the following telegram n. 14851/op of 09:30 hours on 14 July ⁽¹⁸⁾.

"Duce order to be sent to His Excellency Guzzoni the following telegram:

(14) A.U.S.E., folder 1502, "Supreme Command of the Historical Journal", attachment 672: - "Notes relating to the interview at Palazzo Venezia of the day July 13, 1943," pp. 3-4.

(15) *Ibid*, Annex 673: "Notes on the interview at Palazzo Vidoni of 13 July 1943, p. 2.

(16) *Ibid*.

(17) P. MAITESE: The landing in Sicily, op. cit., P. 218

(18) A.U.S.E., folder 1502, "Supreme Command of the Historical Journal", attachment 708 telegram of the Supreme Command No. 14851 / Op. of 09.30 am on 14 July 1943.

"From too many sources come to me reports of poor combativeness of certain units under your command, deal the most severe sanctions, upper & lower, against those who do not fully perform their duty as a soldier. Mussolini. "

The second intervention of the angry leader consisted instead in the following reply to the Supreme Command, sent the same 14 July ⁽¹⁹⁾.

"Four days away from the enemy landing in Sicily I consider the situation extremely delicate and disturbing, but not yet completely compromised. It comes to making a first point of the situation, determine what you have to do and you want to do. The situation is critical because:

- a) after the landing has taken place in depth the penetration with a faster pace;
- b) because the enemy has overwhelming air superiority;
- c) he has trained and specialized troops (paratroopers and glidermen);
- d) because he has almost unchallenged domination of the sea;
- e) because his personnel demonstrate decision and flexibility in conducting the campaign.

Before deciding what to do it is absolutely necessary to evaluate men and matters, to know what happened. It is absolutely necessary.

All information from the enemy (*who is telling the truth when he won*) (note: in italics in the text) and Allied official communications, call for a review of what happened in the early days.

1. The coastal divisions have resisted long enough? That is, they gave the least what we were supposed to give?
2. The second line, that of the so-called target points, resisted or was too quickly overran? The enemy report losses totally insignificant whereas 12,000 prisoners have fallen into his hands.
3. You need to know what happened at Augusta, where was not organized any resistance worth of the name and there was deception caused by the announcement of a reoccupation of a base that had never been occupied by the enemy,
4. The operation of the three divisions *Goering*, *Livorno* and *Napoli* was conducted with the necessary decision and no less essential coordination? What happened to the *Napoli* and *Littorno*?
5. Since the logical attack direction is the Strait, has any defense of that been prepared?
6. Given that penetration has now occurred, there are means and the will to constitute at least a "Sicilian front" to the north, towards the Tyrrhenian Sea, as it was, in other times, contemplated and studied?

(19) S. ATTANASIO: *Sicilia senza Italia, luglio-agosto 1943*, op. cit., p. 131-132 notes and P. MAITese: *Lo sbarco in Sicilia*, op. cit., pp 214-215.

7. The two remaining divisions (Note: "Aosta" and "Assietta") still have a task to the west and are able to fulfill it?

8. It has been done and we want to do something to suppress the military chaos that is being added to the civil chaos caused by bombing all over the island?

9. The irregularities and misery of the connections have given rise to false information that caused a deep impression in the country. In conclusion, the situation can still be dominated as long as there are, in addition to the media, a plan, the will and the ability to apply it.

The plan can not be summarized this:

A. Resist at any cost on the ground.

B. To hinder the enemy's supplies with the massive use of our sea and air forces.

Mussolini. "

It is hardly necessary to recall once again that, despite the latter categorically Directive, "the massive use of our sea forces" never materialized.

To the aforementioned note of Mussolini, Gen. Ambrosio hastened to respond in the same day, minimizing the reported episodes of confusion, including those of the Augsburg - Siracusa Naval Base, as we shall see later ⁽²⁰⁾.

Those who were, however, he continued to see things differently. In fact, after the cases set out gradually and after striking example of Augusta -Siracusa, at 18:15 of July 15 the Historical Journal of the XII Corps Command noted that "the sailors of the armed train Mazzara took away a track section to not allow the movement of the train to position" ⁽²¹⁾.

The day of the 16th then Gen. Guzzoni signaled "the worrying phenomenon of the Sicilian soldiers that arrived from the mainland on the specious reason to fight, but really to get to their families", and "confusion occurred among islanders soldiers, some of whom abandoned their units, to go to their homes" ⁽²²⁾.

Even more categorical was the Commander of the Armed Forces Sicily in a second message of the same day denouncing

(20) A.U.S.E., folder 2124 Letter of Gen. Ambrosio to Mussolini on 14 July 1943. see paragraph 4.

(21) A.U.S.E., folder 2011 "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps." July 15, 1943, p. 45. The armored train of the R. Navy of Mazzara del Vallo was the 76-III-T one of those that Gen. Faldella even lists in his book on the *sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*.

(22) A.U.S.E., folder 2124 / B, file 2124 / A "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 45

"The very serious, unworthy phenomenon of confusion occurred between certain units and services of all Armed Forces located on the island, bar none, throwing a deeply discrediting light on the Italian soldier, especially against the Allied Armed Forces" ⁽²³⁾.

But on that July 16 was recorded a fact even more disconcerting, noted in the report of the Armed Forces Command of Sicily. The fact at 20:15 Gen. Guzzoni was informed by the Naval Command of Messina "that the ferries *Canddi* and *Villa* and the ships *Baza* and *Capo d'Istria* were unusable because the crews almost completely had abandoned the ships" ⁽²⁴⁾.

Episodes like these aggravated the already heavy crisis of Italian transport in the Strait, that the Armed Forces Command Sicily represented several times to Rome, even comparing it to the continuing efficiency of the autonomous German ferry service.

At any rate Mussolini, shaken by this further evidence of the lack of moral steadfastness, those still less credit to mitigating the statements. Gen. Ambrosio of 14 July and ordered on the 16th a general inquiry into the events in Sicily and entrusted to an official of the Secret Service, Luigi Mondini. This investigation, however, was never brought to completion, because both of the difficulties of collection of documentation, and the subsequent fall of Fascism ⁽²⁵⁾.

All this occurred while pounding and unabashed raged Fascist propaganda on all the national press, with insurance "proud and glorious resistance of Sicily" and more on "Combining the three weapons in one breath against the enemy." As usual under the thumb of the regime, Virgilio Gayda, director of "*Giornale d'Italia*", he wrote, for example on July 14:

"The Sicilians and with them all the Italians are not afraid of the test. I am determined to a granite resistance, to a relentless combat, defending every inch of their territory" ⁽²⁶⁾.

Even 18 July, by which time the Axis troops were retreating on the extreme northeastern tip of Sicily,

(23) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: message No. 36485/Serv. of July 16, 1943.

(24). A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A: "Report of the Armed Forces Command of Sicily! June 15 to! 20 July 1943 ", p. 46.

(25) P. MAITESE: *Lo sbarco in Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 243.

(26) *Ibid*, p. 203.

Salvatore Aponte wrote in the "*Corriere della Sera*" for the benefit of fascist propaganda:

"How easily they expected those familiar with our temperament and our history, from the very moment in which the enemy has set foot on the soil of the homeland, Italy jumped to his feet and the people of Sicily is all a flame."

Paul's comment in Maltese stresses that such statements then Sicily "was neither a flame and even a small light" ⁽²⁷⁾.

In that atmosphere of impending breakup yet presumption of unconscious was held on July 15 a new meeting at the Palazzo Venezia between Mussolini, Kesselring, Ambrosio and von Rintelen, in which the leader still expressed the opinion that would not be better to reduce the defensive perimeter to the extreme eastern cusp side of Sicily. At the same venue then the discussion turned fatally on recurrent episodes of poor fighting spirit and confusion and Mussolini was forced to go down on the defensive in the face of German representatives, calling into question the effects of the aerial bombing, the great extension of the coasts and the offensive attitude, and not the defense of the Sicilian soldiers. He still could not help but admit that "during the second day had been lacking a bit of collaboration and the decision in the action" ⁽²⁸⁾.

In any case it did not fail in that session also an optimistic note, but bordered on narcissism, when Kesselring said that until that day the enemy shipping losses in the operation in Sicily amounted to about 740,000 tons. He added that this figure should be trusted due to the level of training reached by the staff and the fact that to get to this amount the figures of the individual reports had been cut back by 40%. Therefore seemed logical conclusion of that Kesselring, that if the Anglo-American casualties of the sea had continued with the same pace the landing in Sicily would cost the enemy dearly ⁽²⁹⁾. Also was an obvious judgment of

(27) *Ibid*, p. 250

(28) A.U.S.E., folder 1502, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", attachment 777, "notes relating to the meeting at the Palazzo Venezia of 15 July 1943". P. 6

(29) *Ibid*, p. 5

the Reich Marshal's judgment if more realistic assessment at all Italian -German levels had made him imagine that throughout the Sicilian campaign, the British and American fleets would lose in reality only 85,000 t.s.l. of ships, including that went to the bottom of the Atlantic during the transfers ⁽³⁰⁾.

However, it is likely that Hitler would put no faith even then such fanciful accounts, with which competed those of Superaereo, which boasted the non-existent or damaged by the sinking of July 17 morning of 51 enemies steamers to 307,000 t.s.l. ⁽³¹⁾. The Führer fact not surprisingly refused at that point to send more reinforcements to Sicily, in addition to those already reached by 15 July, until they were guaranteed at least a minimum of security in the Italian maritime connections to the island. This decision of Hitler was communicated to Rome by Kesselring during the same meeting of the 15th at the Palazzo Venezia and is to be presumed that the abandonment by crews of the four said Italian ships in service in the Strait of Messina, which occurred the next day, did not encourage a rethinking by the Führer ⁽³²⁾.

The latter finally decided to remove his veto of the influx of German reinforcements in Sicily only to create a favorable climate to the meeting with Mussolini at Feltre and on July 18 therefore agreed to allow the transfer movements to the island of the bulk of the 29th *Panzergranadier* Div.

2. AERIAL - NAVAL ACTIONS BETWEEN 12 AND 16 JULY

In the continuing absence of any serious naval contrast, the responsibility to hit the allied fleets in the Sicilian waters still fell to the Axis air forces ⁽³³⁾.

(30) T. DORLING (aka Taffrail): *Mediterraneo occidentale 1942-1945*, Rome, Historical Office of the Navy, 1966, p. 113 and A.B. CUNNINGHAM: *L'odissea di un marinaio* op. cit. , P 424.

(31) A.U.S.E., folder 1503, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command." Annex 966.

(32) A.V.S.E., folder 1502, "notes relating to the meeting at the Palazzo Venezia of 15 July 1943", p. 4.

(33) The planned use of fifteen Italian and nine German submarines in the central Mediterranean modest successes achieved over the period. In contrast were lost in these waters 10 to 13 July two Germanic U-boote (the U-561 and U-409) and four Italian submarines, namely the *Plutto*, the *Nereid*, the *Acciaio* and *Bronzo*, this captured last on July 12 and towed to Syracuse by the English minesweeper *Seaham*. see. NAVY HISTORICAL OFFICE: *La Marina italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II: *Navi Miliari perdute*, op. cit., p. 67.68 and pages. 106-107 and T. DORLING (aka Taffrail): *Mediterraneo occidentale 1942-1945*, op. cit .. page 102.

As we said, the main difficulty for the Italian -German air force was to maintain efficient airports in Sicily and Calabria, subjected to destructive Allied bombing. In this regard Superaereo sent on July 12 a memorandum to the Supreme Command (Appendix no. 11 in the appendixes) in which the unused Sicilian airports totally or partly from the enemy incursions were listed, in addition to the Southern ones of the island already occupied by enemy troops landed ⁽³⁴⁾.

The Axis air activity was directed almost exclusively against the allied merchant shipping, following a joint decision confirmed during high-level meetings held in Rome in those days. Instead, the so called tactical support to ground troops, the lack of which was constantly denounced by various Army commands, called for a timely and accurate in radio link which was well beyond the capabilities of the Armed Forces stationed on the island.

The first air strike of July 12 was carried out by 51 Ju.88 bombers of Fliegerkorps II, that at about struck 05:00 the area between Capo Passero and Capo Ognina the British hospital ship *Dorsetshire*, the steamer *Ocean Peace* and the destroyer *Eskimo*, carrying Adm. Troubridge. Of the three ships only *Ocean Peace* was lost because it had to be scuttled to prevent a possible explosion of the load of ammunition.

In the day squadrons of F.W.190 Assault aircraft and German Bf.110 also targeted the US fleet off the coast of Gela, without obtaining successes, like the successive 115 Ju.88 overnight attack on the same targets.

For its part the Italian Air Force resumed in the afternoon of the 12th attacks on British vessels between Syracuse and Augusta, employing in succession seven Ju.87 divers bombers and nine Re.2002 attackers, five S.84 and S.79 eleven torpedo bombers, without results and losing two Ju. 87.

Far more serious were in the daytime losses of the Luftwaffe, who employed a much higher number of aircraft and

(34) HISTORICAL ARCHIVE OF THE OFFICE OF THE AIR FORCE (A.U.S.A.) Folder OP. 3, Fund 31:
Superaereo memo n. 1B / 10961 of 12 July 1943

it lamented the loss of seventeen aircraft. For the O.B.S. it then calculated that up to 06:00 on 13 July, the II Luftflotte had not seen returning from missions over Sicily 33 Ju. 88, 3 F.W.190, 4 Bf. 110 and 14 Bf. 109 out of a total of flights of 589 bombers, 112 assault (F.W.190), 132 destroyers (Bf. 110), 148 fighters (35).

The results of the Axis air offensive in those first three days were also considered good, since it erroneously estimated hitting a good 116 merchant ships for 152,000 GRT and a battleship, two cruisers, two destroyers and a large number of landing craft. Eighteen of them steamers, about 90,000 t.s.l. and three landing ships were optimistically considered sunk, and fourteen other merchant ships eight landing craft and a destroyer damaged in such a way as to make sure feel their loss.

In fact, as we noted in the previous section, estimates of success in the sky drafted by Italian -German were excessively inflated and led to counterproductive appreciations. Particularly the sinking aircraft Anglo -American ships July 10 to 31, all attributable to the Luftwaffe, were reduced to a destroyer and a American minesweeper, to a British hospital ship and five ships and two landing ships of both nationalities ⁽³⁶⁾.

The allies reputed pleased and also surprised the modest successes achieved by the air forces of the Axis, in consideration of the fact that in those early days of struggle were highlighted a number of shortcomings in the organization of aviation security on their bridgeheads.

On the day of July 13 units of the II Fliegerkorps had to suffer equally big losses, since not returned to bases 13 German aircraft of the 187 employed. Nevertheless the German airplanes sank in front of the harbor of Avola the American Liberty ship *Timothy Pickening*.

The R. Aeronautica employed that day nine CR.42 attackers, eight Ju.87 and eleven Re.2002 on the bay of Augusta, not getting any success and suffering heavy losses at the hands of "Spitfires"

(35) A. Santoni -F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945* op. cit., p. 417.

(36) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War* - U.K. Military series. *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V cit., P. 99.

of the R.A.F. In fact, they failed to return to base two Re.2002 and seven of the eight Ju.87, while in the day other Italian heavy losses were observed in the bombing of the airport of Catania, where they were destroyed on the ground seven fighters, two Ju. 87 and a S.82 transport.

July 13 also marked the establishment of the first units of the 244th R.A.F. group in the conquered Pachino airport and 14th saw the arrival of three squadrons of the 324th group at the airport of Comiso. For its part the V. S.A.A.F. established an advanced base of the XII air support Command at Gela on July 12, and increasing between the 13th and 15th increasing of air units in Farello, Ponte Olivo and Licata ⁽³⁷⁾.

Meanwhile both the Axis Air Forces had come to the conclusion that it was preferable to neglect the field of American landing to focus efforts on the beaches and on the British ports of discharge in eastern Sicily, which was then the closest airports to the south of the peninsula.

In these new attacks on the British sector, almost exclusively night because of the now incontestable daytime air dominance of the Allies, the Axis aircraft took advantage of the growing period of the full moon. Nevertheless, the defense of the British transport, also implemented by smoke screens, proved very effective and the ships kept off the coast did not suffer serious damage on the whole.

High losses instead continued to bring the planes Italian - Germans, mainly because of highly effective twin-engine "Beaufighters" of Malta, converted into night fighters. These British aircraft were credited between 10 and 12 July nineteen victories for shooting down twelve Ju. 88, three He 111, three Cant Z.1007 bis and one Ju.52. Also on the night between 13 and 14 British night fighters, in cooperation with the flak, they destroyed six other Ju.88 belonging to a formation of seventy-six aircraft of Fliegerkorps II, that damaged for its part the landing ship *Ennerdale*.

But that same night the British also, as had happened to the Americans of Gela, had to complain about a bloody incident to their transport planes, which embarked paratroopers to drop behind enemy lines. In fact, since the 8th

(37) *Ibid*, p 98.

Army of Montgomery, approaching the plain of Catania, is encountering growing resistance, it had been decided by the British Command to make an air drop on both banks of the Simeto, with main objective ass the Primosole bridge on the Ionian coast n.114, a dozen kilometers south of Catania. On the evening of 13 July therefore they took off from Tunisia 107 transport aircraft and 17 gliders in tow, carrying 1,856 paratroopers from the British Airborne Brigade of Gen. Lathbury. On this occasion the British ships had been firmly forewarned, but the air convoy had the misfortune to arrive on the fleet while it was being attacked by more then seventy-six German aircraft ⁽³⁸⁾.

The result was that two C-47s were shot down by friendly flak and twelve were lost because of the Italian - German defenses and flight accidents. Twenty-seven transport planes were forced to reverse course for damages or navigation errors, without having carried out the drop. Only sixty-six of the remaining thirty-nine were able to launch at 22:30 their paratroopers and eleven surviving gliders within a radius of one kilometer and a half from the bridge ⁽³⁹⁾.

Therefore, of 1,856 men of the British brigade just 12 officers and 283 enlisted men with three antitank pieces they landed properly around the target, eliminated the 276th battery of 305/17 and successively reached the Primosole bridge starting at 02:15 on 14 July ⁽⁴⁰⁾. But here they had the surprise of suffering already at 06:30 a first counterattack by a unit of the German 3rd Paratroopers Regiment who, ironically, had dropped almost in the same area on the evening of the 12th (see map n. 21).

Rejected this early morning counterattack, the approximately three hundred British paratroopers, under the command of Capt. Rann, who had detached contacts of the bridge demolition charges, they were invested for the remainder of the 14th by repeated new Italian-German assaults and at 17:00 they were forced to leave the northern bank of the Simeto. Then at 19:30 the British survivors, pressed by the II Assault Battalion, withdrew on the heights

(38) D. RICHARDS -H.G. SAUNDERS: *Royal Air Force 1939-1945*, vol. II cit., Italian translation by the S.M.E., p. 478

(39) G.A. Shepperd: *The Italian campaign 1943-1945*, op. cit., p. 59.

(40) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V cit., P. 96

ruling the south bank of the river, but always preventing the enemy to regain full control of the bridge.

The early hours of the 16th came to the aid of residue of the British paratroopers the first tanks of the 4th Armored Brigade and the vanguard of the 151st Infantry Brigade, who could see that the of the approximately three hundred men of Capt. Rann there had been killed or wounded 115.

Simultaneously with this air drop, the British 3rd *Commando* had been landed at 20:30 of July 13 by the Transportation *Prince Albert* at Agnone, with goal the southernmost bridge at Malati on the river of the Lentini ⁽⁴¹⁾. The escort destroyers silenced a shore battery and the 400 men of the *Commandos* who overcame a company of the 372nd Coastal Battalion at the cost of 25 dead and wounded, and finally reached the bridge, but on the alarm rushed to the place in the morning of the 14th the Tactical Group "Carmito" of Lt. Col. Tropea, formed by the IV Semoventi Battalion of 47/32 from the "Livorno" and the 53rd Motorcyclists Co., who, backed by German paratroopers and three tanks, the British raiders forced to abandon the bridge of Malati and to disperse to the south with a total of 28 dead, 66 wounded and 59 missing ⁽⁴²⁾. The bridge of Malati, however, was all the same conquered by the advancing 4th Armoured Brigade on the 15th.

Meanwhile they continued fruitless Italian - German air raids in the British sector. Shortly before dawn on July 14, 44 German bombers targeted the port of Syracuse, losing four Ju.88, while R. Aeronautica launched on the night between the 13th and 14th against British ships fifteen torpedo bombers and thirteen bombers without any result, and with the loss of three S.79 and a Cant Z.1.007 bis.

The voids in the Axis air units grew during the subsequent twenty-four hours. During the day of the 14th in fact the Germans, which employed 158 aircraft in the British sector, lost four aircraft. Overnight then launched another 129 aircraft of II Luftflotte furiously on Augusta and Syracuse, and 13 of them failed to return to base. On top of that no actual damage was inflicted to the port works, nor to the enemy ships, lost as well in the failed attack was four Cant Z.1007 bis, four S.84 and S.79 of nine employed in the same day by the Italian Air Force.

(41) *Ibid*, p. 95.

(42) *Ibid*, p. 95 note.

Instead, mines were to cause the in those days the only damage to the allied ships. On July 14, in fact, the American cruiser *Brooklyn* stumbled on one of these underwater weapons off of Gela and was slightly battered, same fate which befell the 15th to minesweeper *Staff* south of Port Empedocle.

The same day of the 15th the Luftwaffe sent 163 fighters and 23 attack aircraft on the Sicilian land front during the daylight hours and 55 Ju.88 against enemy shipping in Syracuse just before nightfall ⁽⁴³⁾, However, they only managed to damage two British minesweepers .

July 16 opened favorably for Italian arms after so many disappointments. Indeed at 00:25 a S.79 torpedo bomber of the 4th Air Fleet, piloted by Capt. Capelli, damaged and forced to return to Gibraltar the British aircraft carrier *Indomitable* off of Cape Passero. Then at 06:13 the submarine *Alagi* attacked and damaged by a torpedo in front of Augusta the British light cruiser *Cleopatra*, which had on board twenty hands killed and fifteen wounded, but could reach Malta ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

That same day, the German torpedo boats damaged a similar British unit, the MTB-57, in an action southwest of Reggio Calabria.

Lastly we must be here a memo presented the same July 16 by Col. Gen. Brunetti Monti of Air Sicily and containing proposals rightly referred to as “a dream” by the latter. Indeed, they predicted order: a mass bombing of Malta, on the Sicilian airports in enemy hands, the Allied ships off the coast, against enemy ground forces in the Syracuse -Augusta - Catania sector and the Anglo -American rear and cruises of continuous protection of our road traffic ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

(43) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, dispatch of the Liaison Office with the II Fliegerkorps n. 12 O.P.M. of July 17, 1943.

(44) The official history of the Italian Navy attributed this damage to the submarine *Dandolo*, but even after careful investigation conducted on British documents it has come to the conclusion that the submarine *Alagi* was actually the nearer.

(45) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, reminders of the Col. Brunetti of 16:00 on July 16, 1943 and skeptical response of Gen. Monti 17:30.

3. THE BRITISH CONQUEST ENTIRE NAVAL BASE OF AUGSBURG -SIRACUSA AND THE SACRIFICE OF THE "NAPOLI" (See map n. 18)

At 09:10 of July 12 Gen. Guzzoni issued new orders in respect to the sector invested by the British 8th Army, prescribing the following ⁽⁴⁶⁾:

-the "Napoli" Div., minus those already engaged in the Augusta. - Syracuse naval base would remain in place, it had to maintain at all costs Fort Acreide, around which was stationed in cornerstones the column of Gen. Fiumara, This is to cover the flank of the "H. Goering" Div., which had been ordered to move from Gela to Vizzini - Palazzolo line;

-The group of Col. Schmalz had to maintain the positions between Melilli and Priolo Gargallo to parry enemy actions from occupied Syracuse.

Before long, however, and precisely at noon of the 12th, fell the defense of Fort Acreide and the town was occupied by the 23rd Armoured Brigade placed under the command of the Scottish 51st Inf. Div. Here, as is known, Gen. Fiumara had formed since the afternoon of 10 July, with III/75th Inf. and with the XVI Art. Group of 105/28, the three cornerstones to the south of the town, at the junction of Torre Iudica and Monte Grosso, as well as to bar respectively from direction Noto, from Canicattini Bagni and Solarino -Floridia (see Chapter VII, paragraph 4). During the July 11, then this tactical group had been reinforced by an anti-aircraft battery of 20 mm. and three 47/32 semoventi of the CCXXX Battalion, who had carried out an exploratory episode to the junction of Canicattini, destroying four enemy trucks.

The morning of the 12th, while Gen. Gatti Porcinari, commander of the "Napoli", was visiting the defensive positions when was unleashed against the south side of it an attack of the Scottish infantry and tanks of the 23rd Armoured Brigade, supported by a violent artillery fire. The Scots crossed the cornerstone of Torre Iudica and

(46) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, Annex 33: telex of the Armed Forces of Sicily; Command of the XVI Corps No. 16377 of 09:10 hours of July 12, 1943.

penetrated at 11:30 in the upper part of Palazzolo Acreide ⁽⁴⁷⁾.

The occupation of the Palazzolo allowed the rest to bypass of the defensive posture of Gen. Fiumara and had direct consequences on the fate of Ronco column, or rather what was left northwest of Solarino of this battle group and its attached units, as is noted, on July 10 (see chapter VII, paragraph 4, and chapter VIII, paragraph 3). In fact, the British artillery concentrated a deadly fire on the Ronco column's positions starting from 13:00, thereby preventing that kick off from there of the planned counter-offensive. It had rather for the moment circumvented a successful attempt carried out by British armored vehicles from Palazzolo Acreide and had swept away the final cornerstone of the III/75th Inf. at Monte Grosso.

In view of the collapsing defenses of Palazzolo Acreide, Gen. Gatti Porcinari fled to the Command of Col. Ronco northwest of Solarino, miraculously escaping two planes strafing his convoy. Here the commander of the "Napoli" issued at 13:00 on July 12 of that directive to "coordinate the action of the orders of the Colonel Ronco column with that of Schmalz column", but for which he did not know then the exact position ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

First of all they should be sent in the direction of Syracuse four R/35 tanks and mobile group "D", incorporated into the Ronco column, to make contact with the aforesaid unit Col. Schmalz, who falsely was assumed near the provincial capital, as well to form "a hallway in the enemy positions" ⁽⁴⁹⁾.

As the commander of the mobile unit "D", Lt. Col. D'Andretta, "he protested to the General that the task assigned to the four tanks was absurd" ⁽⁵⁰⁾, he obeyed the orders and at 14:00 left in these tanks at full speed for their

(47) AUSE, folder 1427, annexed 59/4: "Excerpt from the report of Gen. Fiumara Rosarilo commander of the infantry "Napoli Division", for the events of the day 9, 10, 11 and 12 July 1943 concerning the preservation of Palazzolo Azreide and Vizzini", p. 7.

(48) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, attached 59/2, "Report on the operations carried out by the column commanded by Colonel Ronco between 10 and 13 July 1943 in the march three Palazzolo Azreide and Syracuse," p. 11.

(49) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annexed 59/13: "Mobile Group "D": report of the feat of arms in the days 10, 11, 12 and 13 July 13, 1943 in the Solarino area", p. 3.

(50) *Ibid*, p. 3.

mission. But the facts just two hundred meters on the road to Solarino, the four R/35 ran into an enemy roadblock, set up by the 69th Brigade of the English 50th Inf. Div.. The first Italian tank exploded on a mine, the second was destroyed by a cannon shot that hit him in the middle and the third, which is also hit by a shell, had the right track broken and overturned in the embankment below. The fourth tank, on which the platoon commander had jumped, S. Lt Profico, survived the explosion of the mine under his led tank, passed unscathed the roadblock, resisting a shell that hit the front of the turret. It then darted down the slope between Solarino and Floridia, engaging with the machine gun and cannon with a convoy of British infantry proceeding in the opposite direction.

After this happy disruptive action, the Renault R/35 came to a bend in the road, just outside Floridia, in which a much more powerful "Sherman", barring the way. A shot fired at point blank range, less than five meters from the Italian tank from the 37 mm gun just nicked paint of the "Sherman" ⁽⁵¹⁾. Immediately after some British soldiers pointed their automatic weapons at the R/35 through the open front doors from the pilot, so all of the Italian crew had no choice but to surrender. Then the captured Renault was destroyed by a cannon shot fired by that same "Sherman" ⁽⁵²⁾.

So failed this desperate attempt to make contact with German troops of. Col. Schmalz, units of the "Napoli" gathered northwest of Solarino were subjected to a renewed concentration of artillery starting at 04:00 on 13 July.

Forty minutes later the British infantry sprang to the attack, which were contained until 09:30, when the lateral infiltration became so deep as to advise Gen. Gatti Porcinari and Col. Ronco to retreat behind the Contrada Trigona positions held by the artillery of X group.

The road towards Palazzolo Acreide was blocked in several places with vehicles loaded with ammunition, detonated by gunfire from the battery to 75/18, the enemy advance slowed ⁽⁵³⁾.

(51) *Ibid*, p. 4.

(52) *Ibid*, p. 4.

(53) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 59/2: Report on operations carried out by the column commanded by Colonel Ronco between 10 and 13 July 1943 in the march between Palazzolo Acreide and Syracuse, "p. 11

The two surviving platoons of the Renault tanks made frequent pushing forwards to ease the pressure, but were soon themselves the object of dense concentrations of fire. To reinforce the lines of least resistance were finally "men of the batteries were removed, whose job was now reduced to that of firing at zero with directions prepared" ⁽⁵⁴⁾. At the center of such extreme defensive bastion were then brought Gen. Gotti Porcinari and Col. Ronco with the flag of the 75th Infantry Regiment.

Subjected to a intense fire of mortars and attacked on the sides and front, the Italian lines of Colltrada Trigona buckled and resistance ceased around 15:00 of July 13 in front of the overwhelming superiority of the British 50th Inf. Div., Gen. Gotti Porcinari was captured with his staff, while Col. Ronco and some survivors rescued the flag and threw themselves into the channel of Mandria di Donna with the bushes on fire and the smoke that hid them at the sight of the enemy. The flag of the 75th Inf. was buried to prevent it from falling into enemy hands and was later recovered after the war.

With this fight, which allowed the British to conquer the nearby village of Sortino, was virtually annihilated the "Napoli" Inf. Div., whose second regiment of infantry was yet to see combat, the 76th Inf. Regiment of Col. Salerno, then was very fragmented. It had in fact its I Battalion of Lt. Col. Parrabbi in Ramacca and in Caltagirone with the CX Corp Art. group of 149/13, the II Battalion of Maj. Nobile and 3rd 75/27 Bty. of the CXXVI Corp Art. group at Luogo Grande the III Battalion of Maj. Properzi and II/54th Art. "Napoli" in Scordia and finally the 47/32 antitank company with the recruits battalion in Monterosso Almo.

Just Settling a cornerstone at Luogo Grande (19.00 of 11 July) the II/76th Inf. of Maj. Nobile was employed by 121st Coastal Regiment of Col. Damiano, with the task of protecting the left flank of the "Schmalz" column, committed within the territory of the fortified naval base of Augusta - Syracuse in the vain march south. So at 16:00 on July 12, the II/76th Inf. was moved forward towards the banks of the Marcellino river, in position to hit the zone to west of Augusta in case of local enemy landing ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

(54) *Ibid*, p. 12

(55) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 59/5: "Command, 76th Inf. Regiment "Napoli., Report on operations carried out 10 to 15 July 1943", p. 2.

While he was carrying out the above transfer, the 5th company of the II/76th Inf., Far right, was attacked on the flank by mechanized units of the 17th British Brigade, which rejected the subsequent counterattack attempted by the 6th Company and threatened to encircle the entire battalion. To avoid this danger, Maj. Nobile began at 20:00 the general retreat on the village of Carlentini, reached during the night.

* * *

While events starring the "Napoli" Inf. Div. were taking place was started at 07:00 of the 12th a British naval bombardment of Monte Tauro and on the same day Augusta. At 10:35 therefore it was presented in the exploration front of the bay of Augusta the British destroyer *Exmoor*, which Adm. Troubridge had just boarded, who moved from the damaged *Eskimo*, but some shots had at once framed the British ship, Forcing her to move away quickly. According to a recent and accurate reconstruction of the episode we now know with certainty that the shots were fired. On that occasion by a German mobile battery and that this reaction was enough to make the British believe that Augusta was still equipped with its formidable defenses ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

At 15:40 that same July 12, however, the *Exmoor* reappeared in port Xifonlo of Augusta along with Greek destroyer *Kanaris*, a minesweeper and a patrol boat. It was still an exploratory action and not of a real landing and just as it was to show the composition of the naval forces and informative foray of a small British ship that captured the collector of duty Giuseppe Tringali, brought on board and questioned by an naval Intelligence interpreter. But when already *Kanaris* and the patrol boat maneuvered towards the exit of the bay, a German 88 mm. gun opened fire and slightly damaging the *Exmoor* aft, which had one dead and three wounded on board ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

At the same time Adm. Leonardi, commander of the fortified naval base, observed the efficiency of a cannon from

(56) T. MARCON: *Augusta 1940-1943*, op. cit., p. 148

(57) *Ibid*, p. 151

76 mm. at the battery "AS 674", he had decided to call into the final gun, entrusting it to the young battery chiefs Caforio and Ghidetti and at the same Console De Pasquale. Recovered the cannon's breechblock, they managed to fire a few shots out to sea, but without any result (58).

The third visit of British ships in front of Augusta on the July 12 turned out a little later decisive. At 19:30 in fact the English merchant *Ulster Monarch* entered the Xifonio gulf and, protected by three destroyers and three gunboats, landed three companies of the 1st Special Raiding Squadron, needlessly thwarted by a German cannon placed on the plain of Cipollazza and some machine guns, only remaining weapons active of a device considered hitherto rightly formidable. The landing could be completed with the loss of only two British soldiers and invaders, overcome the resistance of the units gathered by Frigate Captain Turchi at the Fontana junction, could join in the evening, at the bridge on the Mulinello, with the British 17th Brigade, who had knocked out then, as we have seen, the cornerstone at Luogo Grande of the II/76th.

At 08:00 on 13 July other British torpedo boats entered the harbor of Augusta, followed at 11:00 by the transport *Antwerp*, who landed the special "Glutton" group for the reactivation of the port. Augusta was then invaded by the sea, at a price determined two dead and eight wounded British, and therefore not a fiction; the claim that the naval base has fallen "after every possible resistance to envelopment by land" (59).

Not even three days intervening between the invasion of Sicily and the British landing at Augusta, nor the indiscriminate demolition of the Fortified town's Naval defenses, just as duration, was enough to prevent Italian classified material falling into enemy hands. There was left us this living witness, the then Commander Reynolds, who aboard the *MTB-658* was one of the invaders of Augusta (60).

"The enemy did not seem to even try to destroy the valuable secret material. The machine guns - in the Breda magazine - were complete,

(58) *Ibid*, p. 152

(59) So long it has been touted by M. BRAGADIN: *Che ha fatto la Marina?*, Milan 1955, p. 316

(60) L.C. REYNOLDS: *Sbarco in Sicilia*, Milano 1957, p. 93

even with the small magazines of spare parts, and below deck of a large barge were the secret codes for signaling."

In these desperate circumstances, they saw a collapse of a naval base considered impregnable in front of the landing of three British companies, the men of the 246th Battalion belonging to the 121st Coastal Regiment of Col. Damiano tried to slow the advance of the enemy first at the Augusta graveyard, then the crossroads of Monte Tauro -Quarantamigliara -Brucoli, in collaboration with the unit of sailors collected by Frigate Captain Turchi and a tank company of the German "Schmalz" group ⁽⁶¹⁾. On the evening of the 13th, however, this device, threatened with being cut off from the progress of the English 5th Inf. Div. beyond Luogo Grande and to Villasmundo, had to fall back to the Fondo Mare area, Arcile and Scirumi, with command of Col. Damiano and Adm. Leonardi moved to Masseria Arcile. Brucoli therefore fell into English hands on the morning of the 14th.

The task of curbing the advance of the English 5th Inf. Div. along the roadway #114 between Melilli and Villasmundo remained since then entrusted to the German group of Col. Schmalz, who at that time adopted an attrition tactic of delaying, as is expressly defined by the British official history of the countryside in Sicily ⁽⁶²⁾.

Indeed Col. Schmalz had had instructions from Kesselring July 12 to withdraw slowly and fighting on the line Lentini -Francofonte, in view of the formation of a barrier to protect the plain of Catania and the arrival in the area of the "H. Goering division, "fresh from the failed counterattack of Gela. At the same time the "Schmalz" group was reinforced on the evening of the 12th by the 3rd Paratroopers Regiment of Col. Heilmann, who had dropped in the afternoon, as we have seen, in the plain of Catania. Two battalions of these German paratroopers do not, however, managed to keep neither Melilli, abandoned the 12th nor Villasmundo, occupied by the British 15th Brigade on the night of the 13th ⁽⁶³⁾. In the area of Melilli

(61) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 59/14 "Report on the coastal 121st Regiment, Naval base of Syracuse - Augusta, 10 to 15 July 1943", p. 2.

(62) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit., P. 82.

(63) *Ibid*, p. 91. The German 4th Paratroopers Regiment of Lt. Col Walther, also dropped on the plain of Catania at 20:30 of the July 12, it came into the line along the Simeto between the 13th and 14th.

were also captured the remnants of the 1st and 4th companies of the 504th Coastal Battalion of Maj. De Lorenzis.

In addition to the "Schmalz" group who was retreating from the area even the II/76th Inf. "Napoli," who, as we have said, had come to Carlentini on the night of the 12th to leave again at 20:00 of the 13th with a destination of Scordia. The latter new retreat was decided on the personal initiative of Maj. Nobile, who had vainly expected orders from Col. Damiano⁽⁶⁴⁾. At Scordia then would meet the II/76th and the existing III/76th "Napoli", together with their already examined and artillery equipment, if following a phone order of the XVI Corps Command the III/76th Inf. who had not moved until 19:00 of 13th in the direction of Francofonte, for protection of the right wing of the "Schmalz group", recently settling in new planned deployment between that town and Lentini ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

On this last line of defense, however, the German battle group did not stay long, since at 19:00 on 14 July, the command of the XVI Corps ordered a further retreat towards the course of the Dittaino river and the Motta St. Anastasia Station (see map n. 21). This follows the launch of known British paratroopers at the Primosole bridge and the 3rd *Commando* landing at Agnone during the night of the 13th, which is now threatening to take from behind the deployment of the "Schmalz" Group.

For their part, the II/76th Inf. and the 3rd bty. 75/27 CXXVI Corps Art. group were deployed on the positions of Monte Serravalle and Casale S. Basilio, a barrier of movements from the plain of Catania. The III/76th Inf. instead, left two companies north of Francofonte, sent the other two companies to the Monte Vogliacasi area, also in view of the barrier from Catania.

By the evening of the 14th fell into the hands of the British 69th Brigade, Francofonte, Mount Pancali and adjacent town of Lentini and Carlentini on the southern edge of the plain of Catania.

On Monti Iblei the 231st "Malta" Brigade and the Scottish 153rd Brigade entered Vizzini on the night of the 14th and then pressing on to Militello and Scordia, forced at 13:30 of 15th the II and III

(64) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 59/5: "Command, 76th Inf. Regiment. "Napoli", Report on operations carried out 10 to 15 July 1943", p. 3.

(65) *Ibid*, p. 3-4.

Battalion of the 76th Inf. Regiment to retreat on Palagonia and Ramacca so on, where they joined to the I/76th Inf. and the CX Corps Art. group, passing to the employ of the German "H. Goering" division ⁽⁶⁶⁾. The 76th Inf. Regiment "Napoli", thus constituted, was eventually transferred during the night between 15 and 16 into Paternò, the slopes of Etna, signaling in the units used in battle the following losses: three officers and eight soldiers and ranks dead 4 officers, a non-commissioned officer and 12 enlisted men wounded. Much higher was instead the number of absentees, considered missing, which amounted to 41 officers, 79 non-commissioned officer and 1,792 enlisted men ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

The last unit to surrender within the territory of Augusta -Siracusa naval base was then the 246th Coastal Battalion, still on the afternoon of July 14 it rejected an attack of British tanks around Masseria Arcile, chosen as the seat of command of Col. Damiano and Adm. Leonardi ⁽⁶⁸⁾. In the evening, however, Col. Damiano, fearing to be hemmed in place, ordered the 246th Battalion a general retreat on the cornerstones of Cozzo Telegraph and said Acquadolci, to the northern end of the base area.

The cornerstone of Cozzo Telegraph, where Col. Damiano was surprised not to find the platoon Command along with six officers, but where had flowed elements of the 2nd and 3rd co of 504th Coastal Battalion., was subjected throughout the morning of the 15th to a hard air and naval bombardment, which eliminated even the last piece of 100/22 available. A subsequent onslaught of tanks of the English 4th Armored Brigade swept the latest defenses at 12:30 and led to the capture of the two hundred surviving men of the two cornerstones.

Among the prisoners of the British, however, he did not appear either Adm. Leonardi nor Col. Damiano, or other officers in connection with the Army Command, because they had abandoned the cornerstone of Cozzo Telegraph already on the morning of the 15th, along with other officers of the base Command, trying to reach the lines

(66) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, Annex 51: dispatch Command XVI Corps or. 01/9280/op of 03:30 hours of July 15, 1943.

(67) A.U.S.E folder 1427, annex 59/5 "Command, 76th Inf. Regiment "Napoli", Report on operations carried out 10 to 15 July 1943" page. 4 and p. 7. In this report, in lamenting that even before the fight many had deserted Sicilian military units, "he tried to explain the phenomenon with their "distinct and morbid attachment to the land, for the home, for home, for the family". Cfr. *Ibid*, for. 5

(68) A.U.S.E folder 1427, annex 59/14 "Report on the 121st Coastal Regiment, Naval Base of Syracuse - Augusta, 10 to 15 July 1943", p. 3.

backward⁽⁶⁹⁾. Leonardi and Crescione received hospitality and civilian clothes from Antonino Ansaldo factory at Vastedda Masseria, where they stayed until July 19, posing as the owners of the property. By then, the two senior officers, who had already decided to turn themselves in, they were captured by a British patrol following a denunciation⁽⁷⁰⁾.

The entire 246th Coastal Battalion reported about twenty dead and about two hundred prisoners, while the rest disbanded⁽⁷¹⁾. Col. Damian attributed this phenomenon essentially "the bad impression caused to our troops, exposed to enemy forces air and artillery attack, the disordered dismissal from their posts the soldiers of Milmart, the sailors and the airmen"⁽⁷²⁾.

The British 5th and 50th Inf. Div. had completed in this way the occupation of the naval base of Augusta - Syracuse territory and is now preparing to flow into the plain of Catania.

4 THE BEWILDERMENT ON THE FALL OF THE FORTIFIED TOWN OF AUGUSTA – SYRACUSE

To conclude the description of the events regarding the naval base of Augusta - Syracuse, it must be said that the first serious doubt that anything confusing happened in that case already before its direct investment came to Gen. Guzzoni at 17:00 on 11 July, when he asked the Naval Command of Sicily "a chronological diary of the events of Syracuse - Augusta and to examine the demeanor of Admiral Leonardi"⁽⁷³⁾.

A few hours later echoed on same subject the same as Supreme Command that the alleged misunderstanding of recapture of Augusta which never happened, sent at 21:00 that 11 of July

(69) *Ibid*, p. 4.

(70) T. MARCON: *Augusta 1940-43*, op. cit., p. 169 note.

(71) *Ibid*, p. 170 note.

(72) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 59/14 "Report on the 121st Coastal Regt., Naval base of Syracuse -Augusta, 10 to 15 July 1943", p. 4.

(73) A.U.S.E., 2228 folder: "Historical Military Diary of the 6th Army", Dispatch of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16361 of 11 July 1943 at 17.00.

the following message 14771/Op to Superesercito and to Supermarina ⁽⁷⁴⁾.

"The relative ease with which is taken the base of Augusta, if it returns to the honor of the troops who carried out the counter-attack, it demonstrates how the base was ceded without strong resistance due, much more than it does not appear that there has been a serious naval and even aerial bombardment. Please Superesercito to refer with the greatest concern on the action command of the commander of the naval base and propose appropriate measures, to be pursued rigorously. "

Compounding the atmosphere of suspicion then came that day a new report of July 11, of Col. Schmalz to the O.B, S., transmitted by Gen. von. Rintelen to Mussolini the following evening on the orders of Hitler himself. It stated ⁽⁷⁵⁾:

"Until now, no enemy attack took place against Augusta. The English have never been there. Nevertheless, the Italian garrison has blown up guns and ammunition and set fire to a large fuel depot. The anti-aircraft artillery of Augusta and Priolo tossed the ammunition in the sea, then he destroyed the cannons. Already on the 11th in the afternoon, no official or Italian soldier was in the Schmalz Brigade area. Many officers had already, during the morning, abandoned their troops and vehicles had traveled to Catania and beyond. Many soldiers isolated or in small groups roam the countryside, some have thrown off their uniforms and wear civilian clothes. "

Gen. Ambrosio, who also was strictly on the subject with the aforementioned message n. 14771/op July 11, three days later he tried to minimize the incident in front of Mussolini, particularly pressed by the German outrage, had directed the fiery reminder analyzed in the first paragraph this chapter ⁽⁷⁶⁾. In fact on 14 July Ambrosio replied to Mussolini that "the alleged facts, whether there were, limited incidents of

(74) A.U.S.E., folder 1501, "Supreme Command of the Historical Journal", attached 532: teletype of the Supreme Command No. 14771 / op of 21:00 on 11 July 1943.

(75) S. ATTANASIO: *Sicilia senza Italia*, op. cit., p. 113 and P. MAITESE: *Lo sbarco in Sicilia*, op. cit., page 195

(76) A. Kessling for example, had pointed out that "the commander of Augusta handed over the fort without even being attacked," See. A. KESSELING: *Memorie di guerra*, op. cit., p. 171

particular units of Augusta base, undergoing an intense air and naval bombardment" ⁽⁷⁷⁾.
Col. German Schmalz, known these justifications, however, retorted angrily ⁽⁷⁸⁾:

"Gen. Ambrosio note does not refer exactly what happened. I can not find justification in the behavior of Augusta soldiers have never seen those alleged bombing ... he lacked the will to counter the enemy's land ... However, he remains remarkable courage of the units that have stood ... Lack of fighting spirit of Italian in Sicily depended on the fact that the will to fight is by the leaders and the leaders no longer had control of the situation ... I, know all the unpleasant reality, they are sickened by diplomatic style and ironic note of Ambrosio. "

That the Germans were infuriated by the incidents that occurred on 10 and 11 July in the Fortified town to the point of openly accuse of falsehood the Italian Comando Supremo in the person of its Chief, he was confirmed by the telephone communication of 08:45 hours of July 12 directed from Gen. Monti, Sicily Air Commander, to Gen. Santoro, Chief of the Air Force General Staff. The text reads (79):

"The German Command is irritated because the Schmalz group was sent the following telegram:

"What the Italians do? Efficient seaplanes were left at Augusta and crews have left"(80).

Finally at 23:00 of July 12 the Comando Supremo, received orders from Mussolini, sent to Superesercito and to Supermarina the following new telex no. 14815/op ⁽⁸¹⁾:

"Il Duce ordered that by tomorrow 18:00 13 hours received by the Supreme Command also a summary report of what happened in the base of

(77) S. ATTANASIO: *Sicilia senza Italia*,, Op. Cit., P. 113; E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op cit. p, 433 and A.U.S.E., folder. 2124: Letter of Gen. Ambrosio and Mussolini on 14 July 1943

(78) P. MAITESE: *Lo sbarco in Sicilia*, op. cit., p p. 216-217.

(79) A.U.S.E., background **Superaereo**, SL folder. 1: Telephone communications of 08:45 hours of July 12, 1943 between Gen. Monti and Santoro.

(80) As we have already seen the seaplanes of the Italian maritime reconnaissance captured by the British in Syracuse were 15.

(81) A.U.S.E., folder 1501: "Supreme Command of the Historical Journal", attached telespress 598 n. 148715/op of 23:00 of 12 July 1943.

Augusta. Needs to know in particular demeanor of the master, officers, sailors & soldiers & reason & extent of the destruction of deposits & batteries & more“.

An albeit indirect consequence of the events of Augusta and Syracuse was then the change that occurred in the second half of July in the organization of the Messina -Reggia Calabria naval base, which was also home to the Independent Naval Command of Sicily, commanded by Adm. Pietro Barone.

It all began on July 13 with dispatch 14819/op the Supreme Command directed to Superesercito and Supermarina and thus conceived ⁽⁸²⁾:

"Situation is recommended to enter definitely defense of bases Messina - Reggio, Taranto & Brindisi in the organization coastal of the Army. Please consider ways and make e emergency proposals. "

Supermarina, with tele. 35085 of July 14, only accepted the split between the Autonomous Naval Command of Sicily of Adm. Barone and the Messina Naval Command, which would be passed to the operational dependencies of the local Fort Command ⁽⁸³⁾.

On July 18, however the Supreme Command, with dispatch 14991/op, passed through the Naval Base Command of Messina - Reggia Calabria directly under the XVI Corps ⁽⁸⁴⁾.

Finally, with telegram 15111/op July 22, the Supreme Command ordered the Messina - Reggio Naval Command to be separated from the Independent Military Maritime Command of Sicily and passed under the command of a Major General, an Admiral in the suborder for direct local control of the Messina Naval, all under higher dependency of the XVI Army Corps ⁽⁸⁵⁾. In fact, from July 27 this Base Command was employed, as we shall see later, by Gen. Bozzoni.

In anticipation of an investigation into the fall of the Fortified town of Augusta - Syracuse, meanwhile Supermarina had addressed 15

(82) A.U.S.E., folder 1502, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", attachment 657: telespresso n. 14819 / op of 13 July 1943.

(83) *Ibid*, Annex 727: tele. by Supermarina n. 35085 of July 14, 1943.

(84) A.U.S.E. 1503 folder; "Supreme Command of the Historical Journal", attached 997 dispatch n. 14991 / op of 18 July 1943.

(85) *Ibid*, annexed in 1245; telespresso n. 15111/op of 22 July 1943.

July to the Supreme Command memo n. 28, in which, in exposing their defensive arguments, complained of alleged persecution with increasing rumors of blame and responsibility. Supermarina therefore declared "essential to the good name of the Navy truncate the spread of such rumors, bringing to the attention of the various authorities and hierarchies as - in full or in part – results to date”⁽⁸⁶⁾.

On 23 July, the Carabinieri Command of the XVI Army Corps drafted in this regard a report based on interrogations of some "military stragglers", from which investigators had gained the impression "that the Fortified town of Augusta for the occurrence of something abnormal." Lieut. Col. Schiavoni said Commander had believed then must collect eight written records, from which, despite the lack of maps that would illustrate the terrain, emerged "clearly a particularly important and that is that in the Augusta area the said defense works were made to explode prematurely, so that when later enemy ships presented themselves before that Fortified town it was not possible to make any effective response, because the large calibers had already been destroyed." The Carabinieri report in question of XVI Corps then concluded with the following statements⁽⁸⁷⁾:

"Another impression one gets from reading these statements is that among the commands of the Augusta fort from the first moment reigned the greatest confusion and lacked the desire to the commands the uniqueness and that the major concern, especially among the officers, either was to save themselves by abandoning men without guidance and orders."

On 6 August the 6th Army Command proposed to the G.S.R.E. the complaint to the Military Tribunal about Adm. Leonardi, Consul De Pasquale and Maj. A.A. Bertolini, commander of the airport of Augusta⁽⁸⁸⁾. Then in April 1944 the admiral himself was sentenced to death in absentia by the Government of the

(86) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, file 4: "Historical Documents from the Office of the Navy about the operation in Sicily" Supermarina memo n. 28 of 15 July 1943.

(87) A.U.S.E., 2228 folder, attachment 730/9: report of the Carabinieri of the Royal C.A. XVI, n. 20 / C.R., Of July 23, 1943.

(88) A.U.S.E., 2229 folder, dispatch Command 6th Army n. 26 / P.S.T. of 6 August 1943.

Italian Socialist Republic, but after the war his honor was restored by the conclusions of a Commission of investigation of the Navy, issued November 20, 1945.

This Commission of Inquiry, composed of the Admirals Ducci, Marengo di Moriondo, Salza, Pini and Calleri di Sala, acting on poor documentation and the little evidence available at that time, recognized that "not having been able to fully and in equal measures reconstruct the individual phases of events surrounding the fall of Augusta" ⁽⁸⁹⁾. Unable to fully determine the facts, the Commission considered then having to exonerate the Adm. Leonardi and recognize as the main responsible for the incident only Frigate Captain Turchi Commander of the naval base at Augusta, three Lieutenants and former Consul of Milmar De Pasquale.

By the judgment of the Milan Court of Assizes of Appeal, which acquitted Antonino Trizzino, author of the book "*Navi e poltrone*", from crime of contempt of the Armed Forces, there were also other probative facts on the issue of failure to defend the Augusta – Siracusa naval base, on the cover of which have already drawn up a reliable analysis of the responsibilities Gen. Faldella and Gaetano Zingali. And it is in this analysis, in addition to the facts we reported, which we refer readers, not wishing to further dwell on the sad affair ⁽⁹⁰⁾.

5. THE THREAT ON THE PLAN OF CATANIA (See map n. 21)

The drop of the English paratroopers brigade while not perfect at the mouth of the Simeto in the night between 13 and July 14 and the simultaneous landing of the 3rd *Commando* at Agnone, as well as creating a diversion behind the defense of the last units in the northern sector of the Augusta – Syracuse naval base territory, seriously threatened to open a corridor for enemy penetration towards Catania.

(89) A.U.S.E., 012 folder, file 4: Commission of Inquiry into the events at Augusta - Syracuse.

(90) E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 310-323 and G. ZINGAU: *L'invasione della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 138-166.

While it has been examined already the Italian - German counteroffensive on the day of 14 July against both parachutists and against Commandos, the air landed units were joined by the first tanks of the 4th Armored Brigade, which overwhelmed at Masseria Codavolpe the remains of the 372nd Coastal Battalion and also the "Carmite" battle group of Lt. Col. Tropea, killed in action, regaining the bridge of Malati on the 15th ⁽⁹¹⁾.

In support of the paratroopers and British Commandos they were also developed in the afternoon of the 14th aerial bombardments of Catania and on the local airport as well as undisturbed shelling from the sea, directed also against the 162nd and 165th batteries of 149/35. In the bombardment from the sea participated as well the old battleship *Warspite* (launched in 1913 and then modernized) which had been for a long time the flagship of the "Mediterranean Fleet" and on which Adm. Cunningham composed a mock congratulatory message ⁽⁹²⁾.

Opposite to mood was of course in the circumstance of Gen. Guzzoni that, writing to General Zanussi of Superesercito, I say:

"The fact that an unmoving enemy fleet can bombard Catania for many hours without minimal disruption makes a bad impression" ⁽⁹³⁾.

The bombardment from the sea, started at 17:00, multiplied agitation which then animated in this area the military and civil authorities. Already at 15:30 of the July 14 the Command of the XVI Corps, in transfer from Piazza Armerina in Biancavilla (south western slopes of Etna), had wrongly given as lost the airport of Catania ⁽⁹⁴⁾, while in reality English had then in the sector between Primosole and Agnone no more than seven scattered hundred men and not yet in close liaison with their 4th Armoured brigade dating from the south.

Faced with this small British force the so-called

(91.) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps." p. 87, 88 and p. 91.

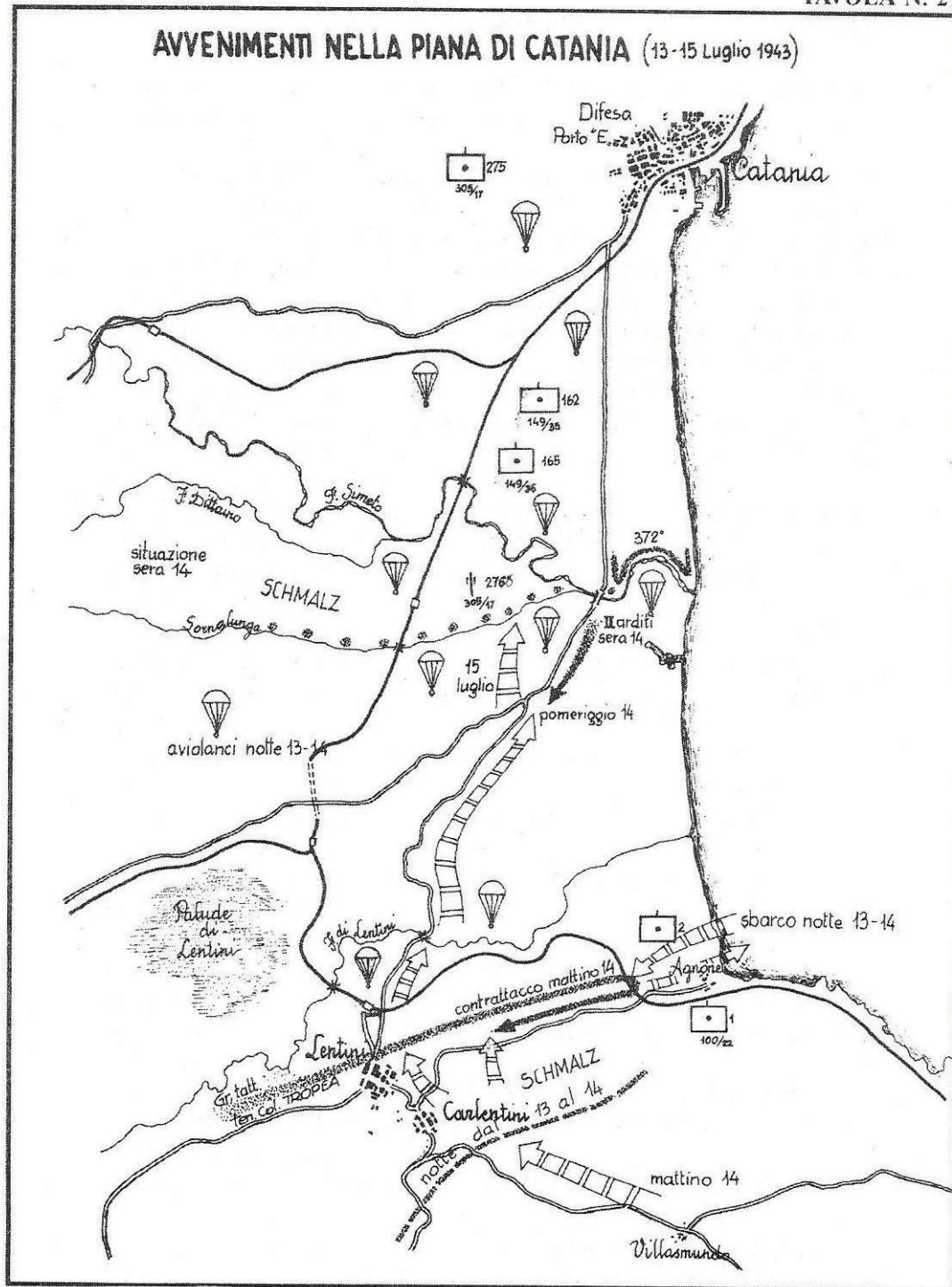
(92) The message said: "well-executed operation. Certainly when the old lady gathers up her skirts so she can run": See. B. CUNNINGHAM: *L'odissea di un marinaio*. Op. Cit., 417

(93) A.U.S.E., 2229 marconigram encrypted folder of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16539 / op of 16 July 1943.

(94) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps." p. 89.

EVENTS IN THE PLAIN OF CATANIA (13- 15 July)

TAVOLA N. 21



port defense "E" of Catania, under the orders of Gen. Passalacqua, could count on seven groups of cornerstones and included of the following units:

The 434th and 477th Coastal Battalion, 105th 81mm. mortar Co., 26th 75/27 bty with four pieces, 483rd 76/40 Milmart bty. with four pieces, Navy armed train 120-1V-S (4 120/45 cannons and 4 20 mm auto cannons), 311th Carabinieri unit, 1345th light truck unit, 130th photoelectric section of 60 , 29th Port Militia unit, 300 men between the customs and anti-sabotage personal of the police and the Depot Co. of the 4th Inf. Regiment. Fixed artillery were characterized by a 305/17 cannon of the 276th bty., Eliminated by British paratroopers in the very early hours of July 14th, and the 162nd and 165th 149/35 batteries with eight pieces, then targeted by naval bombardment.

In the plain of Catania and the airport direct defense there were also the following units of the 213th Coastal Div. of Gen. Gatti, also made available by Gen. Passalacqua as of July 10:

The 372nd Coastal Battalion, the XII Machine Gun Battalion, II Assault Battalion, CCXXX Art. group of 100/22 with three batteries, 67th D.I.C.A.T. Legion, 90th militia Legion, elements of the 7th Milmart Legion and 160th Artisans Co.

Finally inserted itself in the defense of the plain of Catania the same German battle group of Col. Schmalz, to which were was added 3rd and 4th paratroopers Regiment, in turn reinforced by other elements of airborne Engineers at 20:30 on the 14th.

The worry which, as we said, lingering at Catania was transformed into panic when at 17:00 of July 14 began the bombardment from the sea. The Prefect Graziati left the city and in a few moments the entire 483rd Milmart battery was abandoned by the crews. Its commander, battery chief Giuseppe Catanzaro was then arrested and referred to a Tribunal of War, immediately found guilty and shot at 10:30 on 15 July. His memory, however, was rehabilitated after the war by new elements of judgment and the widow obtained the right to a pension⁽⁹⁵⁾.

The wave of desertion was buffered by vigorously

(95) H. POND: Sicily, op. cit., p. 174-175; T. MARCON: *Augusta 1940-1943*: op. cit pp. 146-147 notes and P. MAITESE: *Lo sbarco in Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 210-211.

Gen. Passalacqua, who deployed part of the 372nd Coastal Battalion to protect Simeto then overwhelmed by the British 4th Armoured Brigade, the XXIX Art. group 105/28 which was located in Motta S. Anastasia, and the II Battalion 10th Assault Regt. This battalion, under the command of Maj. Marciano, performed at 19:30 on the 14th, along with the German paratroopers of the 3rd Regiment, A further attack at Primosole bridge, which forced the surviving British paratroopers of Cap., Rann to abandon the southern bank of the Simeto and to retreat to the nearby hills ⁽⁹⁶⁾.

However, as we have seen in paragraph 2 above, the vanguard of the 4th Armoured Brigade and the British 151st Infantry Brigade reached the Primosole bridge and joined in the early hours of the 16th with red berets of the Cap. Rann, who reported for their part 115 dead and wounded.

The united British forces then pressed on the mouth of Simeto against local defenses held by the "Schmalz" group and the aggregate German paratroopers of the 3rd and 4th Regiment, forcing these same units to fall back on July 16 between the left bank of the river and the bridge of Favotto on the stream of Gornalunga.

Therefore the disputed Primosole bridge was finally conquered by the British intact, while the German 3rd Paratroopers Regt.; was cut off, it managed to break out and to get back to the lines at dawn of the 17th with only 500 men ⁽⁹⁷⁾.

6. THE REVERSE MANEUVER OF THE "H. GOERING" AND REMAINS OF THE "LIVORNO" (see map n. 22)

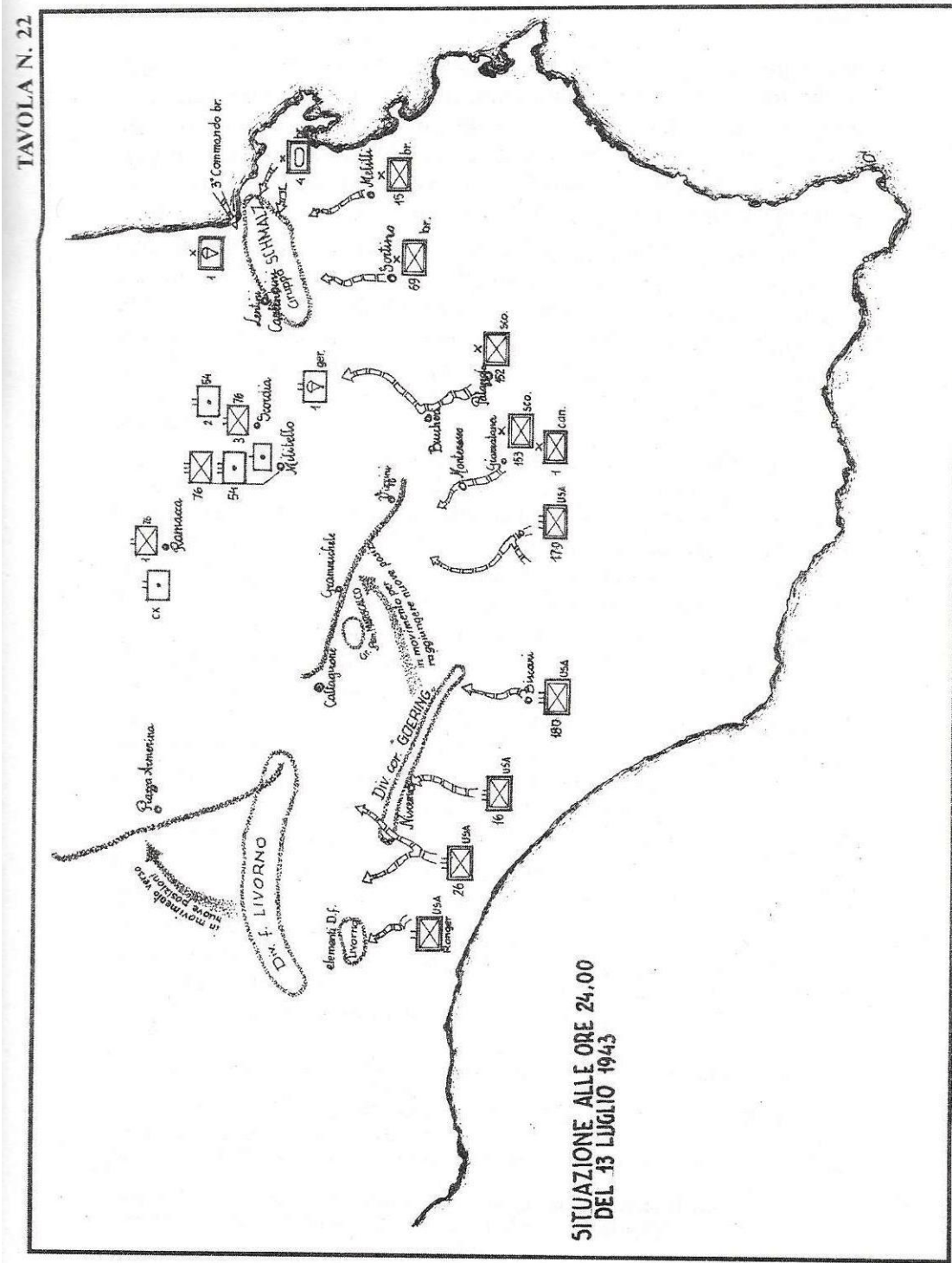
On the beaches of Gela had consumed, as mentioned, the most violent Italian - German counter-attack, that by the early hours of July 12 had led to the capture or annihilation of the battalions I/33rd, I/34th and III/34th of the "Livorno" ⁽⁹⁸⁾.

At 09:10 of the July 12, the Armed Forces command of Sicily

(96) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps." Pp. 96-97

(97) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps." P. 108

(98) A.U.S.E., folder 1506: "Command of the "Livorno" Inf. Div. report on the attack on Gela (11 July 1943) ": folder 2124/B:" Report on the fight of the Gela plain (11 to 12 July 1943) in which took part in the III Battalion of the 34th Inf. Regiment "Livorno" and folder 1506 "Report on the operational activities of tactical group Bruni (III/53rd Inf., " Livorno "). see. Previous Chapter VIII, paragraph 5.



circulated among new orders to the German "H. Goering " Armored Div., which was recovering its battle tanks damaged in the counter-offensive of Gela and that they could be restored to efficiency. According to these latest Guzzoni orders, the German division was no longer to move to the line Vizzini -Buccheri -Palazzolo Acreide, as communicated by the Command XVI Corp with the famous telegram of 21:30 of the 11th but it had to move on the westernmost line Vizzini -Grammichele -Caltagirone, so as to cover all of southern lines of advance for both the British and American. Thus deployed the "H. Goering" would also maintained a close support to the exhausted remnants of the "Livorno" which, according to the same dispatch of Guzzoni, had to withdraw from S. Michele di Ganzaria and Mazarin ⁽⁹⁹⁾.

The delayed start of the ordered withdrawal of the "H. Goering" was so far attributed only to the already mentioned attempt to recover some damaged tanks and subsequent towing difficulty of moving them within the narrow passages of the towns. But there is no doubt that such change orders and destination contributed not a little to prolong reaction times.

Also from the Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily we know that in that circumstance arose a dissension between Guzzoni and Gen. Conrath, who "did not intend to withdraw if not pressed and forced by the enemy." That which induced the same Guzzoni to intervene in the day at the Germanic Delegation in order to press for the withdraw of "H. Goering" ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾.

This German armored division in fact, seemed to want to ignore the order of Guzzoni of 09:10 and, after recovery of some of its tanks, renewed in the morning of the 12th a counterattacks in the area of Gela and precisely both on the Dirillo Bridge along, the roadway #115, and Case Priolo (see map n. 19) ⁽¹⁰¹⁾. In doing so it went back into contact with the I/18th Inf. Regiment and with the American 16th battle group and only disengaged as a result of following new order of 13:40 from the Armed Forces command of Sicily ⁽¹⁰²⁾.

(99) A.U.S.E., folder 1427: Annex 33: telex of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16377 / op of 09:10 hours of June 12, 1943

(100) A.U.S.E., 2124/B folder, file 2124/A "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from days 15 June 1943 to July 20, 1943" p. 35.

(101) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 187-89

(102) A.U.S.E., folder 1427: Annex 36: telex of the Armed Forces Command of Sicily to XVI Corps Operation No. 16488/op of 13:40 hours of July 12, 1943.

"Mechanized Germanic unit stop on Butera and beyond, to disengage the division "Livorno" so that it can carry out withdraw to Mazzarino. We must avoid excessive wear "Livorno", Inform immediately "Livorno". "

For its part the command of the XVI Corps had ordered the morning of the 12th blasting of the bridge decks at km. 16 of #117 Piazza Armerina -Gela roadway and the withdraw on Caltagirone of the Command of the XVIII Coastal Brigade of Gen. Mariscalco⁽¹⁰³⁾. The latter had just collected under his orders about five hundred foot soldiers, the 9th, bty. of the 54th Art. Regiment, three R/35 tanks of the mobile unit "E", when he received a new order to retire directly to Belpasso on the 14th, leaving the defense of Caltagirone to the referenced "H. Goering"⁽¹⁰⁴⁾.

In the night between 12 and July 13 the "Livorno" Inf. Div. finally took position between Mazzarino and S. Michele di Ganzaria, protected remotely by German mechanized units. Here the three surviving infantry battalions (II/33rd, III/33rd and II/34th) constituted a regimental formation under the command of Col. Mona, reinforced by the IV Mortar Battalion, by the IV Art .group og 100/17 of the 28th Regiment and the remnants of CCXXX 47/32 Semoventi Battalion of Maj. Elena, coming from Noto.

The key to this new alignment of the "Livorno" resided in the crossroad of Gigliotto, at the intersection of roadway #117 from Piazza Armerina in Gela and roadway #124 for Caltagirone. The defense of the junction were placed the mortars battalion of Lt. Col. Carta, commander of the entire position, the 6th Co. II/34th Inf. of Maj. Coco, elements of I/34th and survivors and rounded up of the III/34th, the remains of CCXXX 47/32 Semoventi Battalion of Maj. Elena, three bty. the IV/28th Art. and a German tank hunter unit⁽¹⁰⁵⁾.

Throughout the morning of the 13th units of the "Livorno" underwent continuous aerial bombardment, under which fell mortally

(103) A.U.S.E., folder 1427 attachment 99 quatet "Report on operations in the field of the XVI Corps from day 10 to 20 July 1943". P. 11

(104) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps." P. 89 and Annex 46.

(105) A.U.S.E., folder 1506, page no. 2/2136 Command "Livorno" Inf. Div. on the situation of the division at 19:00 on 15 July 1943 See also in the same folder the "Report on the operation carried out by the battle group of Maj. Coco 10 to 15 July 1943". Pp. 1-2.

wounded Col. Mona (gold medal to the memory). So at 14:00 that day, fallen into the hands of the American 1st Inf. Div. also roadblocks of Niscemi, and Biscari Chiaramonte Gulfi, was issued the order of a further retreat to Piazza Armerina and Varco Ramata, with the exception of the Group of Lt. Col. Carta which would remain at the Gigliotto junction⁽¹⁰⁶⁾.

The aforementioned withdraw was just completed on the day of July 14 that at 03:30 of the 15th, as we shall see below, the XVI Corps Command issued dispatch 01/928 /op new general guidelines prescribed another withdraw both "Livorno" that the "H. Goering", this time upwards along the course of the Gornalunga river, on the western edge of the plain of Catania. In particular the "Livorno" had to abandon Piazza Armerina, also evacuated by the XVI Corps Command, and assume new positions in Raddusa (assigned to the "H. Goering" Div.) and Valguarnera⁽¹⁰⁷⁾.

On the morning of the 15th the cornerstone of the Gigliotto junction, he remained isolated, it was subjected to a violent concentration of artillery which, among other things, caused the burning of the cork wood nearby, where died Maj. Elena, commander of the CCXXX semoventi Battalion. Soon followed the assault of the 18th Tactical Group American regimental and 16:00 arrived on site the order to retreat, which was carried out with great difficulties before 18:45. Of the Gigliotto crossroads defenders in fact no more than two hundred men of Lt. Col. Carta managed to reach back lines, while about the same number were captured by the Americans along with eleven pieces of artillery⁽¹⁰⁸⁾.

For its part, the German "H. Goering" armored division had begun to take on the established locations along the roadway 124 between Caltagirone, Grammichele and Vizzini during the evening of July 13, with a delay of about twenty-four hours, motivated by the facts described above, as well as a stubborn further

(106) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "34th Infantry Regiment" Livorno "of the Sicilian field diary", p. 8

(107) A.U.S.E., folder 1427 Annex 51 telepresso Command XVI Corps No. 01/9280/Op. of 03:50 hours of the July 15, 1943

(108) A.U.S.E., folder 1506 "Report on the attack of the enemy at Sughereto position" and folder 2228 of the report of the Command "Livorno" Inf. Div. n. 2/2196 of 16 July 1943 entitled "Synthesis events 15th, Tactical Group Lt. Col. Carta (Sughereto - Bivio Gigliotto)" See. Also U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit. p. 223

counterattack unleashed on the afternoon of 12th against the vanguard of the U.S.A 179th regimental tactical group along the Dirillo⁽¹⁰⁹⁾. So, meanwhile at Caltagirone German right flank, facing south, taking the place of the remains of the XVIII Coastal Brigade of Gen. Mariscalco, withdrew on the distant Belpasso, the left wing of General Conrath received in Vizzini reinforcement the II/382nd Panzergrenadier Regiment, arrived on the island the day before⁽¹¹⁰⁾.

On that day of the 13th, however, the overestimated threat of British armored units along the delicate Ionian sector made Gen. Guzzoni think to it was "necessary to use in the area of Catania the "H. Goering " Div. , releasing it from the front of Caltagirone -Vizzini"⁽¹¹¹⁾. In the same day the commander of Armed Forces of Sicily reiterated this concern, saying he was forced to provide for even the possibility of a general retreat "towards the north-eastern cusp of the island, to resist to the bitter end on the most economical line carried on to about from. Fratello to Cesarò and Adrano until Acireale"⁽¹¹²⁾. He therefore entrusted the Army Command and German engineering Command the study of this maneuver, which would leave the enemy also the whole plain of Catania, but, as we shall see, it was rejected by the Comando Supremo⁽¹¹³⁾.

Gen. Guzzoni did not, however, changed his mind on the withdrawal of the "H. Goering" to the plain of Catania and on July 14, with tele n. 16455/op, communicated at 14.30 to the G.S.R.E. also with his message no. 16456/op, ordered "that the "H. Goering" division with most of the forces acting toward the Catania airport in order to determine in the day the situation that way "⁽¹¹⁴⁾.

This order was sent to the "H. Goering" at 15:30 of the 14th on the part of a portion of command of the XVI Corps

(109) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 190.

(110) F.M. SENGHER und ETIERLIN: *Combattere senza paura e senza speranza*. op. cit., page 232.

(111) A.U.S.E., folder 1427/B, file 2124/A: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 15 June 1943 'on 13 July, p. 35.

(112) *Ibid*, p. 36.

(113) A.U.S.E., folder 1502, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", attachment 673 and 2229 folder: a dispatch Superesercito n. 1052/S of 14 July 1943.

(114) A.U.S.E., folder 1427; "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 89 and folder 2229 tele-cipher the S.M.R.E. n. 16456/op of 14:30 hours of July 14, 1943.

already moved to the Deputy Chief of the G.S. to Biancavilla (south western slopes of Etna), while the rest of the command of Gen. Rossi was still moving into Ramacca ⁽¹¹⁵⁾. Gen. Rossi, now in Biancavilla at 19:30 that day, he estimated, however, that this order could not be executed, since the "H. Goering" Div. had recently assumed the distant position Vizzini - Grammichele - Caltagirone on roadway 124 with facing south and since its transfer to the plain of Catania would miss the much-desired protection to the tired and decimated "Livorno" Inf. Div. ⁽¹¹⁶⁾.

Now Gen. Guzzoni, who has since – as we will see – had received three memorandums from Rome not to abandon their current positions, was persuaded to revoke the evening of the 14th the transfer order of the "H. Goering". It was therefore sent to the Command of the German division of an officer of XVI Corps to cancel the operation ⁽¹¹⁷⁾. However neither the Historical Journal, nor the official report of this Army Corps Command explain the exact cause of the countermand was not fulfilled and because the "H. Goering" Div. has also made what is literally called "the movement toward the southern edge of the plain of Catania, a movement that was then imposed by the circumstances in the morning" ⁽¹¹⁸⁾.

However, on that same July 14 - do not know whether before or after this unsuccessful countermand of Gen. Guzzoni - the latter showed his awareness that the retreat of the German division would cause "a weakening of the central part of the front of the XVI Corp, where at least two enemy divisions followed closely" but also that it was "essential to stop the enemy offensive on Catania and therefore run the greatest risks elsewhere" ⁽¹¹⁹⁾.

(115) The XVI Corps Command moved in the night on July 14 from Piazza Armerina, it stopped in Ramacca and came in waves to Biancavilla after 19:30 the same 14th.

(116) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 99 quater: "Report on the operations carried out in the sector XVI Corp from day 10 to day 20 July 1943". P. 15

(117) A.U.S.E., folder 1427; "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps" pages 90-91

(118) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 99 quater: "Report on the operations carried out in the sector XVI C.A. from day 10 to day 20 July 1943 ". P. 15

(119) A.U.S.E., folder 1427/B, file 2124/A: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 15 June 1943 to July 20, 1943". day 14 July, p. 37.

The most direct consequence of this welter of orders and counter orders, partially or not received, was the abandonment of Vizzini, within which penetrated the night between the 14th and 15th, the 231st Brigade of "Malta" and the 153rd Scottish Brigade ⁽¹²⁰⁾.

The reason for such a painful elaboration of guidelines for the retreat of the "H. Goering" Div and the remains of the "Livorno" to be found in the obstinate conviction of Gen. Guzzoni - despite the negative opinion of the Comando Supremo communicated multiple times - which was necessary already in those days July 13 and 14th perform a general retreat towards the distant north-east cusp.

A proof of this comes from dispatch 16465/op sent by the Armed Forces Command of Sicily to the command of the XVI Corps at 01:45 on 15 July. It is very important because it is in contradiction with the previous encrypted tele 16456/op of 14:30 of July 14 .-. We will return - including these textual insurance of Guzzoni to the G.S.R.E .:

"No – do not -perform retreats from still held positions" ⁽¹²¹⁾.

The next dispatch n. 16465/op of Gen. Guzzoni to Corrlando of XVI Corps instead ordered at 01:45 on July 15 that the divisions "H. Goering", "Livorno" and even the distant "Sizilien" should move back on a line; to be specified later, "to protect the northeast cusp of the island." This retreat was to "begin immediately" ⁽¹²²⁾.

In the prompt execution of these orders, at 03:30 of the 15th of the Command of XVI Corps, with the already mentioned tele n. 01/9280/op, circulated among the notes the provisions so that the "H. Goering", which had just lost Vizzini, abandoned in the day also Caltagirone, moving toward the upper course of the Gornalunga river up to Raddusa, on the western edge of the plain of Catania,

(120) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit., Page 93.

(121) A.U.S.E., 2229 folder: tele-cipher from the Armed Forces Command Sicily No. 16456/op of 14:30 of 14 July 1943, addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(122) A.U.S.E., 2229 folder: Hand tele n. 16465/op, the hours 01:45 of the July 15, 1943, addressed by the Armed Forces Command of Sicily to Operation XVI Corps and, for information, to the Delegation of German connection.

parallel to the contemporary-known retreat of the "Livorno" on the line Raddusa-Valguarnera. On this occasion they were placed under the command of Gen. Conrath of the "H. Goering" the remains of the 76th Inf. Regiment. "Napoli" with the CX Art. group of 149/13, then stationed in Ramacca and being transferred to Paterno ⁽¹²³⁾.

At 03:40 of the July 15 Guzzoni however, in providing to the G.S.R.E. a second promise to not retreat, he sent a new countermand the command of the XVI Corps, which order to "absolutely keep the positions occupied the day before" ⁽¹²⁴⁾.

According to the official report of the XVI Corp Command the aforementioned new countermand was immediately issued by Gen. Rossi to the affected Commands with tele 01/9281/op, "but when it came, the withdraw movements were already underway failing on the troops in the line to withstand the further increased pressure of the adversary" ⁽¹²⁵⁾. In the Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily instead Gen. Guzzoni was precise in this respect:

"At about 08:00 the commander of the XVI Corp informing me that the "Schmalz" group was almost circumvented and that the "H. Goering" division could no longer hold under the enemy pressure: therefore was urgent to withdraw to limit the front" ⁽¹²⁶⁾.

According to this latest version would seem, therefore, that the much discussed Italian-German setback was not fatal, as it happened so unstoppable before the arrival of the countermand, but it was discussed and agreed between Rossi and Guzzoni in the morning of the 15th.

Whatever the real reason, however, was contingent of continued retreat of the willing "H. Goering" into the western part of the plain of Catania, the fact is that this German division had to endure during July 15 heavy rearguard fighting with the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. and at 22:15 of that

(123) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, Annex 51: XVI Corps Command telex n. 01/9280/op of 03:30 hours of July 15, 1943.

(124) A.U.S.E., 1427. Annex folder 99 quater: "Report on the operations carried out in the sector of the XVI Corp from 10 to 20 July 1943 ", 15 July, p 17 and folder 1427:" Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", Annex 52.

(125) *Ibid*, annex 99 quater quoted, p. 17

(126) Folder 1427/B, file 2124/A: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 15 June 1943 to July 20, 1943", 15 July, p. 42

day Gen. Conrath phoned XII Corps Command to report the following:

- "- The line resistance Catania - Raddusa is reached at midnight;
- the outposts line (Gornalunga River) will be occupied by the dawn of the 16th;
- the "Schmalz" group on the left is already deployed on new positions in the foothills north of the plain of Catania between Gerbini station and the sea;
- The rest of the "H. Goering" was divided into three groups: "Ohring" (Western), "Hahm" (Central) employed with the remains of the 76th Regiment "Napoli" and "Rebholz" (eastern)"
(127)

Performed these movements the "H. Goering" left between the 15th and 16th to the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. Grammichele and Caltagirone on highway 124 and allowed the Scottish 51st Inf. Div. entering into Palagonia and Ramacca between the 16th and 17th.

The German armored division will then deploy on a line of resistance between Raddusa and Dittaino, running mostly along the upper course of the Gornalunga stream, with the left wing the "Schmalz group" at Favotto between the bridge and the left bank of the Simeto (see map n. 24).

At that moment the "Schmalz" group, which were added the paratroopers of the 3rd and 4th Regiment, consisted of five infantry battalions, a semoventi group, an Art. group, the Italian XXIX Art group: of 105/28 of Corps Art., four batteries of 88 dual-purpose battery and the 304th anti-aircraft battery of 20 mm.

The "Ohring" group was instead composed of an Inf. Battalion, an Art. group, a tank Battalion, a pioneers Battalion, and the Italian CX Art. group of 149/13. The "Hahm" group, which also included the remains of the 76th Inf. Regiment "Naples", was constituted by two Inf. Bns., an Art. group and a Tank Battalion. Finally, the "Rebholz" group was formed from two Inf. Battalion, an Art. group, one battery for the fixed defense of Gerbini two independent pieces of 88 mm. and six antitank 75 mm. pieces (128).

Finally, it should be recalled that the "H. Goering" Div., to which belonged the last three battle groups, had

(127) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps," pp. 98-99

(128) *Ibid*, p. 105-106: 17:45 of the July 16 meeting between Gen. Conrath and Rossi.

lost in killed and wounded in the only battle of Gela 30 officers and 600 NCOs and enlisted men and was now left with only 45 tanks ready for use of its original 99 ⁽¹²⁹⁾.

We thought it appropriate to dwell at some length on the suffering and controversial withdrawal of the German "H. Goering" division between 14 and 16 July from Caltagirone - Grammichele - Vizzini line to the northern-most Raàdusa and Ditraino river, and for the practical consequences of this withdrawal, both for inaccurate reports disclosed so far in this regard and is, finally, its connection with the contemporary and challenged about Gen. Guzzoni to limit the defense to the northeast cusp of Sicily.

The latter subject, of great importance, we will be treated separately in the last section of this chapter.

7. EVENTS IN THE SECTOR OF XII CORPS TO THE FALL OF AGRIGENTO (See Map n. 23)

In the sector of the XII Corps meanwhile grew concerns after the failure of the counterattack of Licata. Here, as we know, the tactical group of Gen. Schreiber, who also commanded the Germans groups "Neapel" and "Fullriede", reunited under the command of that same name German Lt. Col., so it was withdrawn in the night between 11 and July 12 north of Canicattì, after receiving authorization of Gen. Guzzoni ⁽¹³⁰⁾. Therefore it fell into the hands of the American 3rd Inf. Div. not only the same village of Canicattì, but also the important crossroads between highway 123 from Licata and 122 connecting Agrigento to Caltanissetta.

In defense of the eastern way of access to Agrigento were made then with concern for dams on the river Naro, manned by LXXIII Bersaglieri Battalion, and south of Castrofilippo, supervised by the XXXV Bersaglieri Battalion. All this while at 22:00 on 12 July, the command of the XII Corps went into the hands

(129) A.U.S.E., file Superaereo folder SL.1: message of the Liaison Office of the Royal Air Force at the 2nd German Luftflotte n. 1786 of 15 July 1943.

(130) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", p. 31

of Gen. Francesco Zingales, who replaced Gen. Mario Arisio, fated on August 1 next to assume the command of the 7th Army in southern Italy.

At 19:00 on the 12th, meanwhile, the men of Schreiber and Fullriede, who in the morning had rejected a US armored attack north of Canicattì, had been forced to retreat further to the positions between Serradifalco and San Cataldo, after that enemy tanks had broken through the lines held by the German battle group, located then in the first row ⁽¹³¹⁾. The accommodation on the new front was completed in the night between 12 and July 13, under the protection of the III/30th Inf. "Assietta", the II/6th Inf. "Aosta", the CCXXXIII Art. group of 75/27, by the XIX Art. group "Centauro" of 105/28, the 28th Anti-tank Co. "Aosta" and the motorized machine gun Co. of the 208th Coastal Div., all reinforced arrived with Gen. Schreiber in the morning of the 12th as a result of orders issued by Gen. Guzzoni between 08:10 and 09:55 of the previous day ⁽¹³²⁾.

Unfortunately, almost all of the above reinforcement units had undergone during their transfer to air strikes, which were followed by disorder and defections especially among the soldiers of the "Aosta" and "Assietta". From the report of Gen. Schreiber we know that now they were "essentially units very small in efficiency and of dubious operational capacity". To be precise, the situation was as follows:

- The II/6th Inf. "Aosta" had only 7 officers and 100 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men, with one machine gun;

- The 28th Anti-tank Co. "Aosta" was reduced to 3 officers and 54 noncommissioned officers and enlisted men, with three 47/32 cannons;

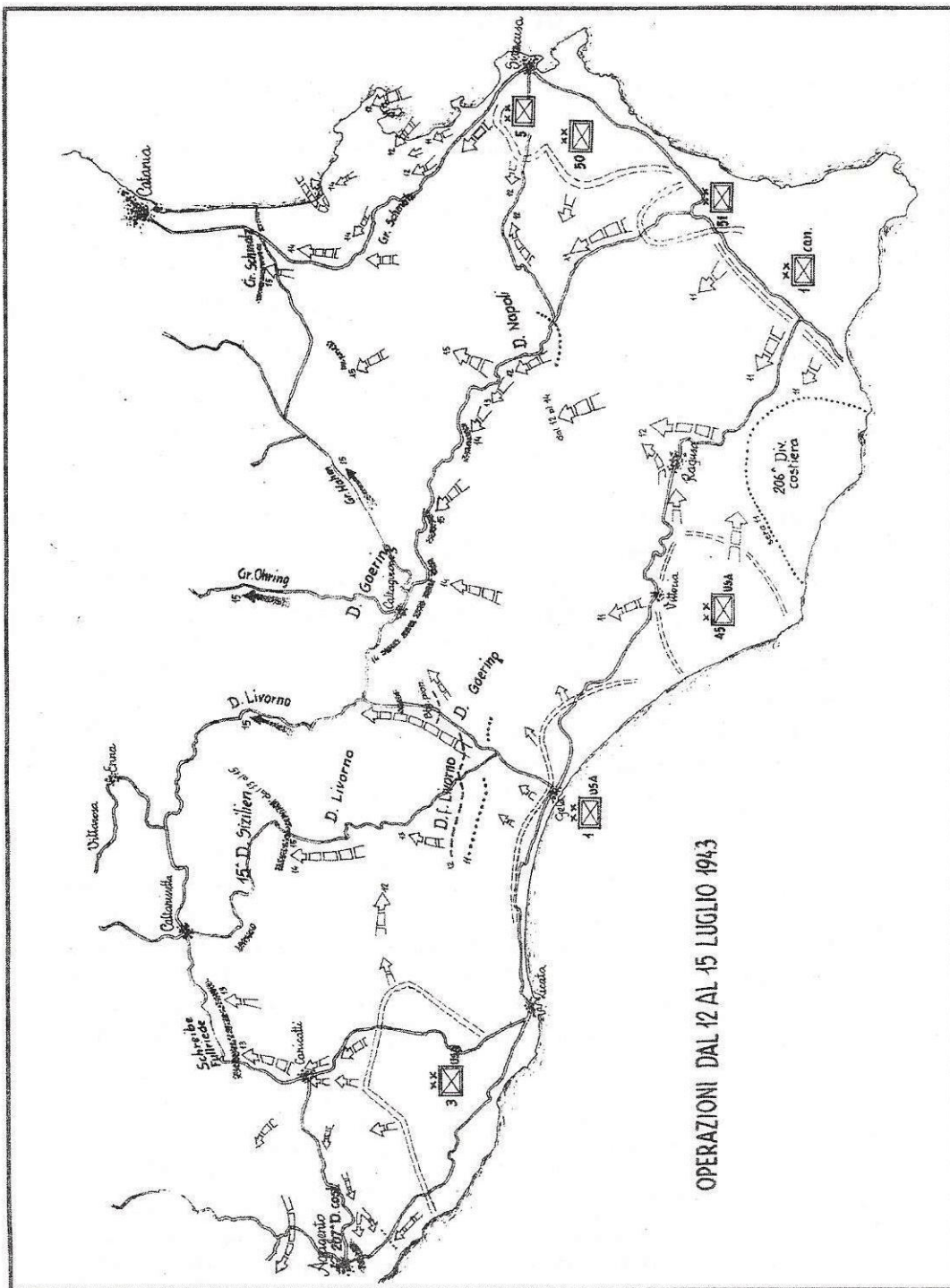
- The III/30th Inf. "Assietta" had lost 30 trucks, but he had had in his files only ten wounded; Unfortunately, however, as it is written in the report of Gen. Schreiber, "Sicilian elements (20% strength) withdrew arbitrarily";

- The CCXXXIII Art. Group of 75/27 was left with only six pieces;

(131) For the deployment see A.U.S.E. folder 2011, Appendix 49: "Situation of the dependent troops of Gen. Schreiber at 17:00 on 12 July 1943", with two sketches.

(132) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 29 and p. 14-16. See. Also chapter VIII, paragraph 6.

TAVOLA N. 23



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-the XIX Art. Group of 105/28 had only four pieces with their tractors ⁽¹³³⁾.

These unfortunate incidents, now no longer isolated, also occurred in the same time as part of the Automotive Directorate XII vehicle fleet, who moved to Francavilla, in whose Historic Diary we read the following ⁽¹³⁴⁾:

"July 14. The early calculations about still missing more than 50% of Messrs. Officers and about three-quarters of the men present at the last camp in Caltanissetta. Unfortunately, it is assumed that some Sicilian officers will not return because they were attracted by more emotional bond that ties them to their families, situated in areas already occupied by the enemy, that the sense of duty. Thus the direction begins as of now the thankless task of denunciations and declarations. "

During the day of the 13th, the Italian-German defenses of San Cataldo-Serradifalco, under the command of Gen. Schreiber, was engaged only in patrols actions and in the evening it withstood an attack in force directed against the latter location. This defense system was further reinforced by the arrival that day in Caltanissetta from distant S. Ninfa of the German group of Lt. Col. Ens (104th Inf. Regiment of the "Sizilien" Div. with two Battalion.), which allowed the reunification on site of the 15th Panzergrenadier Div., now only lacks the 115th Inf. Regiment of Col. Komer two Battalion., which - as is well known- was joined with the battle group of Col. Schmalz.

With these new arrivals in the area, Gen. Schreiber extended until the night of July 14, his strong deployment above Caltanissetta and up to Barrafranca, to join it to the east with the front, then held the remains of the "Livorno" in the zone of fort Armerina and the "H. Goering" on highway 124 Caltagirone - Grammichele ⁽¹³⁵⁾. But, as we saw in the previous section, the latter the eastern front was moved back on July 15

(133) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Report on the feats of arms supported by the 207th Coastal Div. on July 10 and the grouping of Gen. Schreiber from day 11 to day 21 July 1943 ", p. 7.

(134) A.U.S.E., folder 1174: "Historical Journal of the Military Department of the 12th Parca automotive of Sicily from July 7 to August 6, 1943", the day July 14, 1943.

(135) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Report on the feats of arms supported by the 207th Coastal Div. on July 10 and the grouping of Gen. Schreiber from day 11 to day 21 July 1943 ", p. 9

on the line Valguamera -Raddusa -Dittaino, with outposts on the Gornalunga.

On that day of the 15th began to emerge the obstinacy of General Rodt, commander of the German 15th Div. "Sizilien", and of Gen. von Senger und Etterlin, German liaison officer with the Command of the 6th Army. In fact, they refused the logic of strategic retreats and insisted on the need to resist in place, according to the specific orders of Hitler, despite the deterioration of the situation on neighboring fronts; what caused a series of disagreements between the Armed Forces Command of Sicily and those responsible Germanic commands⁽¹³⁶⁾.

In particular, the retraction of orders in relation to the "Sizilien" Div., issued by Guzzoni with already known tele n. 16465/op of 01:45 on 15 July, were not respected by Gen. Rodt and von Senger, then backed by Gen. Hube, who arrived the same day in Sicily to command the XIV Panzer Corps⁽¹³⁷⁾.

Therefore throughout the day and the whole night of July 16, while the Italian - German Eastern Front had already retired on the noted line Valguarnera - Raddusa - south of Catania, the new German "Ens" group engaged in much more advanced position at Barrafranca fought a tough battle with the American 70th Armored Battalion, joined by the 26th Regimental Tactical Group of the 1st Inf. Div. and coming from Gela, Butera and Mazzarino. Earlier US armored units were surprised by the Germanic determination and had to retreat, but then, supported by infantry and artillery fire of three groups, they regained the lost ground. The American 26th Tactical Group, however, exhausted, had to be replaced in line by the 16th Inf. Regiment of the same first division, that night arriving at Barrafranca and on the 17th crossed the Salsa river - cutting the highway #122 east of Caltanissetta⁽¹³⁸⁾.

Only on July 17 was the "Sizilien" *Panzergrenadier* Div. was aligned in accordance with the trend of the new eastern front, backing between Villarosa and Valguarnera. From the latter,

(136) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A "Report of. Armed Forces command Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943 ", p. 42.

(137) F.M. SENGER und ETIERLIN: *Combattere senza paura e senza speranza*, op. cit., p. 243.

(138) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. p. 231-232

places it was immediately after contact with the avant-garde of the Canadian 1st Inf. Div., that the same day they entered the Piazza Armerina, evacuated by the Command of the XVI Corps. and the remains of the "*Livorno*."

For his part Gen. Schreiber on July 16 returned to Gen. Rodt the Command of the "Fullriede-Neapel" group and withdrew its Italian units still further north, between Portella di Recattivo, Alimena and Resuttano.

Specifically Gen. Schreiber moved to Portella di Recattivo of the remains of the III/30th Inf. "Assietta", a company formed by the residues 107 elements of the II/6th Inf. "Aosta", the XIX Art. group "Centaur" of 105/28 and four 90/53 Semoventi. To Resuttano was deployed the I Group "Palermo" cavalry squadrons, which "had remained inactive in Caltanissetta", as well as in the 1st Motorized Machine Gun Co. ⁽¹³⁹⁾. Finally at Alimena were allocated to the Command of the 17th CV.NN Legion with the XVII CC.NN Battalion, also "remained inactive, Caltanissetta", the 28th Antitank Co. "Aosta", the CCXXXIII Art. group of 75/27 to and two 90/53 Semoventi ⁽¹⁴⁰⁾.

* * *

As part of the 207th Coastal Div., now under the command of Gen. De Laurentis after the new responsibility entrusted to Gen. Schreiber, had occurred in the meantime another unfortunate fact. On July 12, the entire staff of the four 90/53 batteries of the militia LXXVII group of anti-aircraft and a 76/40 anti-ship battery abandoned their posts, after having sabotaged the fire centers.

The energetic intervention of the Command of the 207th Coastal Div. managed to make once more efficient a battery, but remained unused twelve pieces 90/53, 76/40 and twenty-four 20 mm. machine guns, weapons that almost all had the possibility of fire both anti-aircraft ammunition and antitank .

The serious consequences of the fact it was even more evident when the same day a US naval division,

(139) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Report on the feats of arms supported by the 207th Coastal Div. on July 10 and the grouping of Gen. Schreiber from day 11 to day 21 July 1943", pp. 9-10.

(140) *Ibid.*

comprising the cruisers *Brooklyn* and *Birmingham*, bombarded of a long time Port Empedocle, using catapulted seaplanes for the direction of the shot, which remained entirely undisturbed by the now almost nonexistent air defense.

In sharp contrast to these episodes, the front northeast of Agrigento, along the highway #122 for Canicattì, the XXXV Bersaglieri Battalion repelled bravely in front of Castrofilippo a series of attacks of the American 30th Regimental Tactical Group during the 12th and 13th July, counting in its ranks over two hundred dead, including the battalion commander, Maj. Moccia, gold medal to the memory . At dusk of the 13th the survivors shortened their front pulling back neatly toward Favara, where the following day they rejected other enemy attacks. Only July 15 the fighting XXXV Bersaglieri Bn. was hit around Favara by Rangers and the 11 / 7th ftr. U. S.A. and the survivors retreated to Spinasanta (141).

Along the rolling coastal 115 meanwhile LXXIII Bersaglieri Battalion, ably supported by the remains of the 2nd Art. Bty. of the XXII group and the coastal batteries of the XXXV and LX groups, was also rejected on the lower course of the Naro several raids of I and III Battalion the American 7th Inf. Regiment during July 13, also capturing some prisoners. But because of the demolition of the bridge at Masseria Giudice, performed at 22:25 on the 11th, and the destruction of others roadway crossings further up the made on the 13th, the LXXIII Bersaglieri Battalion. stood isolated on this side of the river, surrounded, it was overcome July 16⁽¹⁴²⁾.

The LXXIV Bersaglieri Battalion, who arrived in Agrigento on July 13, was deployed to cover the entrances to the city, with a company at the crossroads of Spinasanta, and tried unsuccessfully to break the encirclement in which was tight on the LXXIII Battalion, suffering heavy losses at the hands of US tactical aviation.

By allied official reports we know that these American offensive actions towards Port Empedocle and Agrigento were originated by a "reconnaissance in force" entrusted on the 13th

(141) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/8: "Report on the fighting supported by the 207th Coastal Div. (10- 16 July 1943)." P. 15

(142) E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 183. For the time and causes of noted self-destruction see. A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", p. 20 and folder 2124/B "Report on the fighting backed by 207th Coastal Div. (10-16 July 1943)." P. 13.

of July by Gen. Patton and Keyes to Gen. Truscott, commander of the US 3rd Inf. Div. ⁽¹⁴³⁾.

During the 14 and 15 July the naval bombing near Port Empedocle were intensified with the entry by the British monitor *Abercrombie* into the area and the US cruiser *Philadelphia*, while four minesweepers began to open gaps between the minefields facing beaches. In this pounding from the sea, against which was repeatedly requested the intervention of the air forces of the Axis, he echoed a barrage of fire by two American artillery groups, which broke all links between the defensive strongholds.

On July 15 fell under the pressure of the armored troops opposing the Cozzo Mosè positions and the next morning a column of the III Ranger Battalion, going around Agrigento from the north and cutting highway #118 from Raffadali, reached Montaperto, west of the provincial capital, which was so completely surrounded ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾.

At 07:30 that morning of July 16, the Command of the 207th Coastal Div., noting other defections, was forced to inform the command of the XII Corp. "That elements of the Royal Navy not proved up to the task." Three hours later, with phonogram 16473/op, the Command of the Armed Forces Sicily replied by ordering "the arrest and extremely rigorous treatment for those soldiers moving apart from units and disguised in civilian clothes" ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾.

At 14:30 some American Rangers units entered in Port Empedocle, and Agrigento fell at 20:11, more of that on July 16, with the capture of the Command of the 207th Coastal Div., including Gen. De Laurentis, at Rupe Atenea ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾.

(143) W.G.F. JACKSON: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit. . p. 77; H. POND: *Sicilia*, op. cit., pp. 298-299 and U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 200-206 and p. 224.

(144) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 228.

(145) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Historical Military Diary of the XII Corps." Annex 93 and p. 44. For the mentioned facts was then reported to the Military Court the naval commander of Porto Empedocle. note. A.U.S.E., 2229 folder, dispatch of the Command of the 6th Army n. 26 / PST on August 6, 1943.

(146) *Ibid*, folder 2011, attachment 110.

8. THE MOVEMENT OF THE DIVISIONS "AOSTA" & "ASSIETTA"

Also in the XII Corps sector witnessed in those days to the complex and still debated eastward transfer of two infantry divisions "Aosta" and "Assietta", respectively located between Alcamo and Salemi and in the Belice (see chart n. 5).

In fact, in addition to the incorporation in the tactical group of Gen. Schreiber both the II/6th Inf. and the 28th Anti-tank co. of the "Aosta" and the III/30th Inf. of "Assietta" and CCXXXIII Art. group of 75/27, commanded by Gen. Guzzoni at 08:10 of July 11, the Armed Forces command Sicily examined the overall eastward movement of the two divisions.

The first measure taken in this regard by Gen. Guzzoni what was already said the evening of 11 July, when he ordered the XII Corps Command of the Army to prepare an urgent transfer by rail and by truck of "one of the two infantry divisions in the area west of Catania", suggesting to move the meantime in the ordinary way the "Assietta" to the south east, so as to "prevent threats from the Agrigento area which could develop undisturbed to the north and northeast" (and then to the northwest, that is, on Palermo) ⁽¹⁴⁷⁾.

The Command of the Armed Forces of Sicily was so intent on 11 July to transfer the "Aosta" to the sector opposite of Catania and slide the "Assietta" into the Agrigento area, covering the east-central part of the island. But at 08:10 of July 12 Gen. Arisio phoned. Gen. Guzzoni expressing concern about the deteriorating situation between Licata and Agrigento and asking permission to allocate on the other hand to the "Assietta" in the area between Chiusa Sclafani, Prizzi and Lercara Friddi, in operation therefore to the northwest defensive and not to the northeast of Agrigento. The authorization to such a deployment was granted and confirmed by Guzzoni with phonogram n. 16378/op of 09:30 on July 12 and consequently Gen. Arisio informed later with tele 1/9755/op the Armed Forces Command of Sicily to have imparted orders for both the aforementioned movement of the "Assietta", and for a slight shift

(147) All in A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A: "Report of the Command FF .AA. Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 28.

of the "Aosta" into the S. Cipirello area, also in the north western tip ⁽¹⁴⁸⁾.

The movement of the "Assietta", partly motorized and partly on foot, was only completed on July 16, after the division commander Gen. Scotti, had requested and obtained permission to slow down the march by twenty-four hours ⁽¹⁴⁹⁾. That day therefore the division took an extended deployment that of Cerda, next to the Gulf of Termini Imerese, down to the south west to Chiusa Sclafani, with an appendix at Portella Misilbesi, close to Menfi on the south coast. In particular, the deployment was the following.

- At Cerda I/29th Inf., the CXXI Art. Group of 149/13 from the 12th Corp Regimental Group and the 5th Tank co.. Commander Gen. Moneta, available to the XII Corp, under who also passed the 136th Coastal Regiment of Caccamo.

- At Roccapalumba the Command of the 30th Inf. Regiment with its II Battalion, the CXXVI Mortar Battalion (minus a co.), the 126th Anti-tank Co. of 47/32 with two platoons, the 50th motorcyclists Co., a garrison co., the XVI Art. group of 75/27 and the CLVII Art. Group of 149/19. Commander Lt. Col. Morettini.

- At Lercara Friddi the I/30th Inf. (minus a co.), one district co., the III/25th art. (less a bty.), the 1st Art. bty. of the XLVIII Group of 105/28, nine 75/18 semoventi and 300 cavalymen on foot. Commander Col. Ainis, from which depended at Portella S. Francesco two platoons of the 126th anti-tank co., a co. of the I/30th Inf. and a bty. of the III/25th art.

- At Prizzi Command of 29th Inf. Regt. with its II Battalion, the II/25th Art., six pieces loose of 75/34, the LI Bersaglieri Battalion) the 1st co. of the CXXVI Mortar Battalion and a A/A section of 20 mm. Commander Col. Fontana.

- At Chiusa Sclafani the III/29th Inf., the IV/25th Art. (minus the 10th bty.), The XXI Art. group of 105/28 with two engineers co. and elements of the depot of Bisacquino. Commander Lt. Col. Pochini.

(148) A.U.S.E., folder 201: "Historical Military Diary of the XII Corps", Annex 36, p. 22 and folder 2229. phonogram n. 16378/op of the Armed Forces Command Sicily of 09:30 am on 12 July 1943.

(149) A.U.S.E., 2124/B folder: "Report of the operations the "Assietta" Inf. Div. from July 9 to August 13, 1943, on 13 July, p. 4.

- At Portella Misilbesi the 10th bty. Of the IV/25th Art., along with the II/5th Inf. Div. "Aosta" ⁽¹⁵⁰⁾.

As for the "Aosta" Div., the views of the High Command in Rome and of Gen. Guzzoni were similarly mixed.

At 13:40 on 12 July, the Armed Forces Command Sicily, received the latest bad news from the sector of the XVI Corps, forewarned the XII Corp. Command which that night would have made the transfer by the railway of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. to eastern Sicily, seen that the "Assietta" remained in western Sicily. But at 18:00 Guzzoni was back on his intentions to strengthen the defense of the plain of Catania and communicated by phone to Gen. Arisio to suspend the transfer of the "Aosta" since the G.S.R.E. had reported the possibility of an enemy landing also in the western part of the island. The "Aosta" then would remain in place and if anything would have to be extended to the south, also occupying the positions left by the "Assietta" in S. Ninfa, Partanna ⁽¹⁵¹⁾.

Therefore the "Aosta" would assume a more elongated alignment towards the south in tight defense of the western tip of the island, and at that point none of the original intentions of Guzzoni was alive. In practice the "Aosta", which was originally intended even to the distant area of Catania, was now bound to the coastal defense of the western cusp, assuming the following deployment even more to the west than that of the "Assietta" and located beyond the Belice valley ⁽¹⁵²⁾.

- The "Aosta" Division Command in Salemi;
- The 5th Inf. Regiment a Battalion at S. Ninfa and two Battalions at Partanna (II/5th was later diverted as seen in Portella Misilbesi);
- The 6th Inf. Regiment a Battalion at Calatafimi and one at Salemi (II/6th was incorporated into the "Schreiber" group);
- the 171st CC.NN Legion at Alcamo;

(150) *Ibid*, p. 6-7 and Annexes 1 and 2. For the Cerda cornerstone see. A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps," Page 36, p. 39 and Annex 59.

(151) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps.", P. 25-26. The unfortunate fear of the Supreme Command about possible enemy landing in the western part of the island was reported that day to Guzzoni by the S.M.R.E. with phonogram n. 1022

(152) *Ibid*, p. 26-27

(153) *Ibid*, p. 36 and Annex 60. This intention is also confirmed by the often cited official

-The 22nd Art. Regt. with its four groups divided to form battle groups with infantry battalions of Calatafimi, Salemi, Pananna and S. Ninfa. That the function of the "Aosta" was now only to contribute to the defense against any enemy landing in the far western part of the island was later confirmed explicitly by Gen. Guzzoni which in the phonogram n. 16408/op of 09.00 on July 14 pointed out, among other things, to the XII Corps Command that such a division would "support the coastal protection" ⁽¹⁵³⁾.

With the task of covering the transfer of the "Assietta", making contact with the enemy coming from the sector of Licata - Canicattì, it was formed to 08:45 on 13 July the so-called Mobile Grouping West of Col. Cav. Ricci, who united the already existing mobile groups "A", "B", "C" of the XII Army Corps – as well as the VIII Art. Group of 75/27 (see Annex no. 8 in the appendix) ⁽¹⁵⁴⁾.

In particular at 21:30 of 14 July it was decided that the mobile group "A", reinforced two days later with two Art. btys. of the XLVIII Group, It would lead to Aragon (north of Agrigento), the mobile unit "B" who was operating from the nearby Raffadali and that of mobile unit "C", reinforced by a bty. of the CX Art. Group who remains available in Chiusa Sclafani ⁽¹⁵⁵⁾.

At 17:30 on July 15, however, the mobile group "A" was diverted to the farthest of Villalba station to protect the right wing of grouping of Gen. Schreiber, while at 11:30 on 16 July, mobile group "B" had the order to counter attack from Raffadali on Agrigento ⁽¹⁵⁶⁾. The latter, however, order could not be executed because, as we saw in the previous section, Agrigento fell that evening into American hands

(153) *Ibid*, p. 36 and Annex 60. This intention is also confirmed by the often cited official report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily in A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A, p. 34.

(154) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", p. 31 ..

(155) *Ibid*, pp. 41-42. incidentally remembers tin by now that at 16.30 on 14 July, the XII Corps Command C.A. I order the Defense Command Port "N" Palermo "to complete the occupation of the forehead on the ground with particular regard to southeasterly backgrounds." note. *Ibid*, annex 39 tele of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 163787 / op. 11.30 hours of July 12, 1943.

(156) *Ibid*, p. 45 and p. 52.

and because the local situation was considered "permanently impaired" ⁽¹⁵⁷⁾.

Please note that in the meantime, from 22.00 on July 12, Gen. Francesco Zingales was replaced in Command of the XII Army Corp by Gen. Mario Arisio, who assumed the command of the 7th Army in Southern Italy on the following 1 August ⁽¹⁵⁸⁾.

We will see in the next section the deployment of the XII Corp was changed on July 17 as in relation to the desire of the Armed Forces Command Sicily to move the front back into the entire north eastern cusp of the island.

9. THE CONTROVERSIAL PROJECT OF GENERAL GUZZONI OF A COLLECTIVE RETREAT ON THE SLOPES OF ETNA (See The map in the Appendix)

On the night of July 12 the headquarters of the Armed Forces Command Sicily at Enna was violently bombarded by Allied planes, which caused a lot of damage and the interruption of almost any wired connections ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾. The following day - as we said in the previous paragraph 6 - Gen. Guzzoni gave orders to study a general retreat towards the north east of the island on the cusp of line S. Fratello - Cesarò - Acireale, so that both of these events had their in part to decide on the transfer of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from Enna to Passo Pisciaro, in Randazzo, on the northern slopes of Etna. This transfer, contemporary to that of the XVI Corp Command from Piazza Armerina to Biancavilla, was completed in the night of 13 July ⁽¹⁶⁰⁾.

Just the question of withdrawal of the front into the north-eastern tip of Sicily, which were also examined in connection to the provisions relating to the German. "H. Goering" Div. and

(157) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B "report on the fighting supported by the 207th Coastal Div. (10-16 July 1943" p. 17.

(158) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 42: tele Command XII C.A. n. 1/9774 of 12 July 1943 and 2003 folder: "Historical Journal of the Military Command of the 7th Army," the day in August 1943, and attachments 117 and 118.

(159) F.M. SENGHER und ETIERLIN: *Combattere senza paura e senza speranza*, op. Cit., P. 232

(160) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A. "Report Command Armed Forces Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 36

the initial intentions of Guzzoni to transfer the “Aosta” toward Catania, was the most important and pressing strategic issue in those early days of the campaign, as well as an extreme historical subject for the subsequent implications.

First of all it is necessary to note that this project took shape at a time when, as has been seen, the attitude of the German commanders was to say and not retreat unless compelled by the enemy. Also, strange to say, the desire to Guzzoni a retreat on the North East cusp of the island continued to be expressed and pursued after the “Assietta” and the “Aosta” were destined -as seen -to the defense of the western sector. In this case, after setting with the latter two Italian divisions a double barrier that enclosed the Belice Valley and the Corleone - Palermo, a retreat in the north east cusp of the island could only cover the moving forces of the XVI Corps. The consequence would be to abandon to their fate the troops of XII Corps, condemned to isolation.

Precisely for these reasons the Comando Supremo denied on the same July 13 Guzzoni to authorize the withdrawal project on the line S. Fratello - Cesarò -Acireale, would abandon to the enemy also Catania, and reported it to the Germans. We know that General Ambrosio, arguing that afternoon a more modest proposal of Kesselring to withdraw "at a later time" behind the line S. Stefano di Camastra - Catania, confessed that he had already rejected an even more radical project of Guzzoni ⁽¹⁶¹⁾.

The refusal of the Comando Supremo in fact reached Gen. Guzzoni at 13:30 of July 14 through a communication of Gen. Zanussi, instructed by the Chief of the Army G.S., Gen. Roatta, who recommended to "maintain the positions hitherto occupied south of the plain of Catania" and anticipated the arrival of reinforcements by air, that provision was repeated immediately after the dispatch of the G.S.R.E. n. 1052/S drawn to the stress on time (13:30), in which he called the "extreme gravity" the intention of the Commander of the Armed Forces Sicily to fall back on the line S. Fratello - Cesarò - Acireale ⁽¹⁶²⁾.

(162) A.U.S.E., 2229 folder, dispatch of S.M.R.E. n. 1052/S of 13.30 of 14 July 1943.

(161) A.U.S.E., folder 1502, " Historical Journal of the Supreme Command ", attachment 673 “Notes relating to the interview at Palazzo Vidoni and of 13 July 1943”. P. 2.

He was advised instead to adequately strengthen his left wing, so as to contain the enemy advance "for the time necessary the flow of the forces from the XII Corps" ⁽¹⁶³⁾.

In his report on the events Gen. Guzzoni justified with the following words his attitude not shared in Rome ⁽¹⁶⁴⁾.

"When on July 13th I communicated to G.S.R.E. that in view of the situation I was trying to "fall back" slowly into the northeast cusp of the island:

- The "Goering" Div. was not yet in a position to support the left wing of the deployment, which was pressed so strongly as to make possible to consider the fall of Catania;
- It was not known when it would start to flow the Germanic 29th division;
- I could not see the high degree of resistance of the German troops; it was only in possession of elements to suggest their poor suitability to maneuver.

In short, the situation improved:

- For the left wing resistance south of Catania and the effectiveness of the German parachute units:

- Started to arrive (15 July) the German 29th Division, a battalion of which, immediately rushed to the left wing of the "Goering" Div. closed the existing gap made between the "Goering" itself and the remains of the "Livorno" Division, in which pointing a strong enemy column, and the subsequent arrival of the whole Germanic Div. who deployed in the northern coastal belt;

- Great resilience demonstrated by Germanic troops;

- For the recovery of part of the XII Corp. from the west, this explains the retreat on the resistance line has been able to take place more slowly than I could imagine in the day of 13 July. "

Incidentally, from this passage of the report the Armed Forces Sicily Command also they learn when the first units of the new German 29th Panzergrenadier Div. began to arrive on the island,

(163) For all this step, see. Also A.U.S.E., 2124/B folder, file 2124 / A "Report Command Armed Forces Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 37-38

(164) *Ibid*, p. 38-39

who immediately gave decisive contribution to the defense and what positions they took.

Apparently convinced, Guzzoni hastened to then assure the G.S.R.E. with the following tele-cipher n. 16456/op of 14:30 hours that same July 14:

"Report your orders transmitted by means of General Zanussi do not - I say do not - perform retreat from positions still held" ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾.

But he also had to communicate with the same message he had already ordered the "H. Goering" division to move to the airport of Catania to restore the local situation ⁽¹⁶⁶⁾.

At 00.30 on 15 July came to FF. AA. Sicily's Command another important marconigram the G.S.R.E., no. 1060/S of the 14th, by which it renewed the previous two messages regarding withdrawal pressure ⁽¹⁶⁷⁾. In particular, it warned that higher authority (Ambrosio or Mussolini?) Had decided that they would do "everything possible to keep the current advanced line", which would come by air the Italian-German reinforcements and that any back line of resistance was to include the massive Madonie.

According to the High Command of Rome, therefore, an extreme resistance line should not be expected immediately, but in an unspecified future, and still he was not starting on the Tyrrhenian coast at S. Fratello, as he wanted Guzzoni, but beyond Madonie and then on the Gulf of Termini Imerese, about sixty kilometers further to the west as the crow flies.

Apparently not to hurt the susceptibility of the Commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily, but especially to be able to monitor more closely, as we shall see later, the G.S.R.E. sent on the same day Gen. Gorlier, bearer of an explanatory letter of Roatta which spoke of the wishes of the leader, the moral and military necessity reasons of preserving the island a

(165) A.U.S.E., 2229 folder: tele-cipher of the Armed Forces Command Sicily or. 16456/op of 14:30 hours of July 14, 1943.

(166) *Ibid.*

(167) A.U.S.E., 2228 folder: marconigram the S.M.R.E. n. 1060/S of July 14, 1943; The arrival time of 00:30 hours on the 15th is indicated in the 2124/B folder, file 2124/A "Report Command Armed Forces Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", 15 July, p. 41.

greater room for maneuver than that provided under the Guzzoni project ⁽¹⁶⁸⁾.

Despite all this, at 01:45 on 15 July, the Commander of the FF. AA. Sicily ordered the Command of the XVI Corps from the "retreat of the divisions "Goering" and "Livorno" and the "Sizilien" division on a line, then clarified, in the north-eastern cusp for protection of the island" ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾.

With the same surprising message Guzzoni also dictated, as we have seen, the details of such withdrawal, which was to "begin immediately" ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾.

You can not explain this attitude of the Commander of the FF.AA. of Sicily, as well as we do not know the reasons for his next new rethinking of 03:40 hours of the 15th of July. By that fact Gen. Guzzoni sent to the G.S.R.E. the radio message 16469/op in which he declared to accept the orders given by the dispatch 1060/S, that he had just received an hour and a quarter before issuing the order to the XVI Corps to move back "immediately" all three mobile divisions on the northeastern tip ⁽¹⁷¹⁾.

Guzzoni did actually an attempt to undo his recent withdraw orders of 01:45 on July 15, but had no luck. In fact, as we have seen in paragraph 6 of the Command of the XVI Corps did not managed to arrive in time to the "Livorno" and. "H. Goering " his dispatch 01/9281/op with which quashed the withdraw order issued with previous message n. 01/9280/op of 3:30 hours ⁽¹⁷²⁾. Thus the retreat of these two divisions, long called for by the Commander of the FF, AA. Sicily and opposed by Rome, finally took place.

On July 16, the Axis forces in the XVI Corps sector then reached the following positions from which they had still the order of no more retreat.

(168) A.U.S.E., folder 2124: a single personal letter by Gen. Guzzoni, by Gen. Gorlier, n. 546/SP of 14 July 1943.

(169) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, hand telegram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16465/Op. the 01:45 hours of the July 15, 1943, addressed to; Command of the XVI Corps and the Delegation of German connection.

(170) *Ibid*

(171) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, radio message of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16469 / Op. the hours 03:40 of the July 15, 1943, addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(172) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps," pp. 95 and attachments 51, 52 and 57.

- Division "H. Goering" deployed facing south, in the three groups already mentioned, among Raddusa and Dittaino, with outposts on Gornalunga and to the left wing "Schmalz" group and the Gerbini paratroopers between the station and the sea.

- Rest of the "Livorno" Division between Raddusa and Valguarnera.

- A Battalion of the German 29th Div. added between the "H. Goering" and the "Livorno".

- 213th Coastal Div. used only with her 372nd Battalion at the mouth of the Simeto.

- XIX Coastal Brigade not committed.

- Tactical Group of Gen. Mariscalco withdrawn into the Belper area ⁽¹⁷³⁾.

As for the German 15th Div. "Sizilien", which was then united under the command of Gen. Rodt between Pietraperzi, and Barrafranca, and that was also included in the withdraw order of Guzzoni of 01:45 hours of the 15th, we have already mentioned the conflict of views between Italian and German Commands. Gen. von Senger in fact, according to the letter of orders from Hitler and Kesselring, did not consent to make any withdrawn if not compelled by the enemy ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾. The withdrawal of this German division was instead considered necessary by Guzzoni for not leaving between it and the rest of the eastern device, which he pulled back, a passage on the main route Fort Armerina - Valguarnera - Enna.

To give a strong hand to Gen. von Senger who took over in the dispute at 13:00 the same 15 July Gen. Hube, arrived that same day in Sicily with Command of the XIV Panzer Corps, allocated to Castiglione, under which were combined by the 16 all the German troops on the island ⁽¹⁷⁵⁾. Guzzoni was then forced to yield and to agree that the "Sizilien" remained on its positions of Pierraperzia and Barrafranca until he had been able to withstand the increasing enemy pressure. The latter could be countered by truth only another thirty-six hours and at dawn on July 17 the "Sizilien" was forced to fall back fighting

(173) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 99 quater: 'Report on the operations carried out in the field of; XVI C.A. from 10 to 20 July 1943 haunting." pp 17-18.

(174) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 212 /A "Report Command Armed Forces Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943". Page. 42.

(175) F.M. SENGER und ETIERLIN: *Combattere senza paura e senza speranza*. Op. Cit., P, 243.

on Villarosa and Valguarnera under pressure from the 16th and 26th Inf. Regt. of the American 1st Div.

As we know, however, the Gen. Schreiber had withdrawn on July 16 on Portella di Recattivo, Alimena and Resuttano with the residues of the Italian units listed in paragraph 7 above.

* * *

Meanwhile also against Gen. Guzzoni the XII Corps took an initiative that clearly contrasted with its earlier assurances given to Gen. Zingales at 09:00 on the 14th and then to the G.S.R.E. at 14:30 on the 14th and 03:40 of the 15th, to give up the planned withdraw into the northeast area of the island.

In fact, at 22:30 of July 15 dispatched from the Armed Forces Command Sicily for the Command of XII Corps the following encrypted radio message ⁽¹⁷⁶⁾.

“Operational Requirement immediately impose division transfer “Aosta” & two motorized groups of 105/28 of the 12th artillery regimental group of Corp *in the north-east zone of the island* (emphasis, note). Movements must be partly by rail and by road transport, using up all available Corp vehicles available.

Unloading stations for rail S. Agata Militello - Torrenova - Cape Orlando. To exploit maximum north coastal trucking. Collection area by division & groups: Cesarò - S. Teodoro, Immediate direct agreements with Detramiles 609 also for charging stations. Movements start: immediate.

Communicate urgent day start moving - in stages - itineraries - formations - day arrival collection area. General Guzzoni ”.

This important radio message and then showed the continuing intention of the Armed Forces Command Sicily locking themselves "immediately" to the last defense in the northeast cusp of the island, also recalling there the “Aosta” Inf. Div. which until then had been designed to "support the coastal defense" in the extreme western sector ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾. In addition, with this measure,

(176) A.U.S.E., folder 2229 and folder 2011, attachment 103: encrypted radio message P.A.P.A. the FF.AA Command, Sicily n. 16492/op of 22.30 of 15 July 1943.

(177) A.U.S.E., folder. 2228, "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", p. 36 and Annex 60 mentioned radio message of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16408/Op. 09:00 hours of July 14, 1943.

finally he tried to avoid at least the isolation of the middle of the moving forces of the XII Corps. So with the next radio message n. 16506/op of the night of the 15th Gen. Guzzoni also ordered the immediate withdrawal of the northeastern cusp, into the Cesaro area, the Engineers Command of the XII Corp, With the whole organization of the labor⁽¹⁷⁸⁾.

The said transfer order of the "Aosta" came on Gen. Zingales' table at 15:45 on 16 July and a quarter of an hour later the XII Corps Command announced to Guzzoni that the division would immediately withdraw was made by only one railroad, lacking the vehicles, and that the transport would take five days⁽¹⁷⁹⁾.

Gen. Zingales however, he did not remain at all satisfied at the "Aosta" being subtracted from the western sector and at 22:00 of the 16th sent to the Armed Forces Command Sicily one of his officers with a hand phonogram for Gen. Guzzoni, in which he complained of the measure and denounced the inability to defend under these conditions western Sicily⁽¹⁸⁰⁾.

At this point Guzzoni again reversed his decisions, as indeed in respect to the "Aosta" and the "Assietta" had already done a few times in one day of the 12th (see Paragraph 8). This time to give a hand to the arguments of Zingales came a dry and rather controversial radio message of Superesercito of July 16, according to which the latest report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily appeared contradictory and seemed to want to hide the implementation of an effective withdrawal. In particular, this radio message from Rome expressed it in this way⁽¹⁸¹⁾:

"It is not feasible to get the idea situation & much less move forces does not seem possible, that the situation of XII Corp, remains "unchanged" when "Livorno" division withdraws to final positions Raddusa station - Dittaino - Leonforte, "Goering" division retires on Caltagirone and the Schmalz group is forced to fight along the Simeto. It is preferable

(178) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", p. 53, and Annex 104 telegram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16506/op of 15 July 1943.

(179) *Ibid*, p. 53 and Annex 105

(180) A.U.S.E., folder. 2228, hand telegram the XII Corps No. 1/9881 of the hours of 22:00 on 16 July 1943.

(181) A.U.S.E., folder. 2229, encrypted marconigram of Superesercito n. 1105/S of 16 July 1943.

fact that with such a retraction of the Germanic 15th Division & XII Corp., at least with mobile forces, tend to flow back towards the north and northeast., not to be cut off."

Superesercito therefore called for "urgent clarification on this matter, because accurate situation knowledge & future operational intentions V.E. has, obviously, decisive influence on the manner and starting size of the peninsula reinforcements" (182). Which meant no uncertain terms that the aid promised by Rome and Berlin would henceforth conditioned by the attitude of Gen. Guzzoni, adhering more or less to higher directives. And their effects in those days - as we have already we said - Hitler interrupted the flow into Sicily of the core of the 29th *Panzergranadier* Div, only resumed on the 18th,

At that time, moreover, the behavior of the Commander of the Armed Forces Sicily was. subjected to undergo control by Superesercito, via Gen. Ciorlier, sent to the island by Gen. Roatta not only to personally deliver his known letter n. SP 5461 of July 14, but also to report on the real situation, on whose exact statement Rome evidently was beginning to doubt. In fact, at 19:25 on 16 July Gen. Gorlier, with his own encrypted radio message, he managed to communicate from Sicily to G.S.R.E. that the XVI Corps, the "H. Goering" Div. and the "Schmalz" group had finally made the famous and disputed retreat to positions on the northern edge of the plain of Catania into the stretch Bicocca Station - Gerbini station - Catenanuova" and that the "Aosta" division "he had ordered last night to move by rail & truck to the Cesaro zone" (183).

by now - to Gen. Guzzoni so closely monitored, so that there remained to comply with orders given by G.S.R.E. since July 14 with the well-known message 1060/S, which called for the inclusion of Madonie in the future rearward line of resistance and certainly not immediate and radical shift of the front into the north eastern cusp, characterized, among other things, the transfer of the "Aosta" to the distant Cesaro, therefore the

(182) *Ibid*

(183) A.U.S.E., folder. 2228, encrypt radio P.A.P.A. Gen. Gorlier to Superesercito n. 4 of 19:25 hours of July 16, 1943

Commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily, pressed also by the complaints set out by Gen. Zingales at 22:00 hours of the 16th, canceled for the third time his orders regarding the “Aosta” and with the important telegram 16545/op of the 08:15 of July 17 he sent to the XII Corps Command new instructions, accompanied by a personal letter ⁽¹⁸⁴⁾.

In conclusion now the “Aosta” Inf. Div. was no longer moving toward Cesaro, in the north-eastern tip of Sicily, but would in a single body with the “Assietta”, with Mobile West Grouping, with all units still mobile and with the largest number of artillery to defend the Madonie, ie set the center-north of the island, as desired by Rome. Textual ultimate goal was to “organize themselves to defend the area bounded by the following locations: Cerda, Sclafani, Caltavuturo, Petralia, Gangi, Nicosi”. ⁽¹⁸⁵⁾

The transfer phase of “Aosta” of this alignment would be protected by the “Assietta”, which had to remain for the time on their extended positions between Cerda, Roccapalumba, Lercara Friddi, Prizzi and Chiusa Sclafani, with outposts in Portella Misilbesi ⁽¹⁸⁶⁾.

The point of suture between that expected new front of the XII Corps and already illustrated positions of the XVI Corps in the plain of Catania would then become the Alimena- Portella di Recattivo alignment which was set back - as it is known - the “Schreiber” group, as well as the sector Villarosa - Valguarnera to which the 15th Div. “Sizilien” was eventually forced to retreat at dawn of the 17th ⁽¹⁸⁷⁾. The new deployment of the “Aosta” and “Assietta” in defense of the Madonie, which required long routes, however was not completed because on July 21 it was changed to a line of the most rearward protection

(184) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: “Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps”, Annex 124, hand tele of the Armed Forces Command Report Sicily n. 16545/Op. of 08:15 hours of July 17, 1943 and point person; and Gen. Guzzoni n. 16546 stresses the date, received at 10:15 hours by the Command of the XII C.A.

(185) *Ibid*

(186) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B. ‘Report on the operations Inf. div. “Assietta”. P. 8

(187) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: “Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps”, Annex 130: radio message of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 1655 /op of 01:00 of 17 July 1943 to direct control of the XII C.A.

of Caronie, under the impetus of events, as we shall see in section 6 of the next chapter ⁽¹⁸⁸⁾.

That General Guzzoni was induced to take the measures of 08:15 hours of July 17 as well as the malcontent of General Zingales, also from the controversial and dry radio message from Superesercito 1103/S of 16 July, it is confirmed by the abovementioned personal letter from him sent to the same Zingales, in which, among other things, we read about the new defensive front on the Madonie:

"It's a large area, I understand, but the higher orders that correspond to future operational requirements dictate that line" ⁽¹⁸⁹⁾.

The much smaller defensive perimeter advocated since July 13 from Guzzoni and passing through S. Fratello, Cesarò and Acireale, in the extreme northeastern tip of Sicily, was instead relegated to "extreme line of defense, to the bitter end" to be taken in the future in case of unsustainable enemy pressure. The Germans, in fact, and for them by Gen. Hube, wanted even such extreme future front be wider, so as to understand the excellent defensive positions of Troina ⁽¹⁹⁰⁾.

Coastal troops of the XII Corps, not equipped for mobility, were left to defend the ports of western Sicily after the fall of Agrigento and Port Empedocle took place, as is known, on July 16. They would also have to cross through the hinterland blockades and from July 18 were placed under the command of Gen. Marciani, former commander of the 208th Coastal Div. and senior commanding officer remaining in place ⁽¹⁹¹⁾.

However the delay caused by the numerous orders and counter orders about the "Aosta" and the "Assietta" made that a large proportion of these divisions could not escape the accelerated American advance towards the Tyrrhenian Sea, as we shall see in the next section 6.

(188) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A "Report Command Armed Forces Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 49

(189) A.U.S.E., folder 2011 and 2228: personal letter of Gen. Guzzoni n. of July 17, 1943

(190) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily Superesercito n. 16551 11:15 am of July 17, 1943 and 2124/B folder, file 2124/A "Report Command Armed Forces Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 47.

(191) A.U.S.E., folder 1503, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", attachment 975 and 2011 folder: Attachments 140 and 146 and p. 70-71.

CHAPTER X

THE RETREAT TO THE NORTHEASTERN CUSPIDE (July 17 to 22)

1. AERIAL-NAVAL ACTIONS FROM 17 TO 22 July

The period under review was characterized by a decreasing effectiveness of the Italian-German air raids conducted against both Sicilian ports conquered by the enemy and on Allied ships in the waters of the island.

After fact damaging, at dawn on July 17, the two merchant *William P. Coleman* and *Queen Emma* in the bay of Augusta by 85 German aircraft, unsuccessful bombing were developed during the next night to the English ships in front of Syracuse twenty-six German Ju. 88 and against the port of Augusta Italian six S.84, with the overall loss of three German aircraft and a national three-engine.

The latter port and the ships in the harbor were again targeted by the Luftwaffe the following night, but of sixty Ju. 88 only forty employees finished the bombing without much luck, and four of them were shot down.

Remarkable was however at that, period, the effectiveness of the German Transport Ju.52, who did their utmost to reach the German troops in Sicily with spare parts and ammunition.

For their part, the Allied air forces, as well as to pound more and more heavily the Italian cities, including Rome, referred to the famous bombing of July 19, launched in total in the day of the 17th a good 4,348,000 leaflets, which reaffirmed the intention in London and Washington of the distinguish the responsibility of the fascist regime from the behavior of the Italian people, that in Sicily seemed to prove the rejection of incitement by Mussolini ⁽¹⁾.

(1) D. RICHARDS -H.G. SAUNDERS: *Royal Air Force 1939-1945*, vol. II cited. Italian translation by the S.M.E. page 480.

Meanwhile Superaereo, following an energetic appeal of the Comando Supremo issued the afternoon of July 17, had decided to use against ships in the bay of Augusta the only units of the (Italian) Royal Air Force still in a position to perform daytime actions, namely the 5th Assault Stormo. The raid, conducted on July 19 by fifteen Re.2002 taken off from the Calabrian bases and arrived on the target without an escort for a mistake, was bloodily repulsed by the "Spitfire" of the British 152nd Squadron, which six Italian planes fell.

After this failure, although the Re.2002 Assault were withdrawn from the fight, and the offensive activities of the (Italian) Royal Air Force in Sicily was continued, always without luck, by the poor S.79 torpedo bombers, and by the few Cant X.1007 bis. bombers of the Viterbo regimental grouping and by the S.84 of the 43rd Stormo in Apulia. Even the latter unit, though, after losing a dozen aircraft, was forced to suspend the mission in the third decade of July.

Meanwhile in Sicily they remained as of July 21, according to Gen. Santoro, only small amounts of CR.42 of the 15th Assault Stormo and the M.C. 202, of the 155th and 200th Fighter Group. On the evening of July 21, however, "Superaereo ordered the Air Force Commander of Sicily to move to the mainland, leaving in place a core of command with the task of regulating the outflow of elements and means of the Air Force" ⁽²⁾.

In fact the same July 21 Col. Aiello, the Air Force Command of Sicily, announced that all requests for air intervention had to be diverted from that day to the Command of Sardinia, via the liaison officer, Lt. Col. A.A. Orsi. This is because "Superaereo, in order not to expose the aircraft to the continuously enemy air offense, taking into account the proximity of the lines, the lack of suitable sighting systems and adequate defense had ordered the Palermo airfield", be "used as a springboard for aircraft from Sardinia" ⁽³⁾.

On July 27, according Gen. Santoro, no longer existed

(2) G. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II cit., P. 550-551.

(3) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 201: dispatch of the Air Force Command western Sicily n. 211/op of 21 July 1943.

in Sicily Italian air units and on that date also the 4th Air Fleet of Puglia virtually ceased any offensive action ⁽⁴⁾.

Unfortunately, in the rush of the evacuation many vehicles of the Air Force were abandoned, so that the XII Autopark of Sicily picked and inventoried over 400 vehicles at airports still in the hands of Axis troops, put back into efficiency more than one hundred. Its report informs us that "all this hard work, especially for the sovereign confusion with which the vehicles and the material who had been left *abandoned* (underlined in the text, author's note), was carried out under the constant and unnerving aerial offense" ⁽⁵⁾.

With the gradual decay of the Italian airpower, the weight of the operations in Sicilian skies poured even more seriously on the shoulders of the pilots of the German 2nd Luftflotte. They on the night of 20 and July 21 finally managed to get a hit - paid with the loss of two of the fifty *Ju.88* employed - sinking in the bay of Augusta the British steamer *Empire Florizel* and torpedo boat *MTB-288* ⁽⁶⁾.

The Luftwaffe attacked on the evening of the 21st also an American convoy under way between Malta and Sicily, but the modest result represented by the damage to the merchant *Samuel Parker* was paid by the Germans with the loss of five of the forty-seven bombers used in the circumstances.

Finally during the night between 22 and July 23 the port of Augusta was again attacked by Italian two Cant Z 1007 bis and forty Germans *Ju.88*, , three of which did not return to base.

Meanwhile on the sea, as the American naval historian S. E. Morison wrote the, "numerous, noisy and inconclusive" were clashes between opposing small surveillance ships, mostly of the torpedo boat type. Italian media of this type, under the command of Capt. Mimbelli, carried out unfruitful actions in the waters of Augusta during the nights on 17, 18, 19 and 21 July, the last of which the motor torpedo boat *Ms. 21* was seriously damaged

(4) G. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II cited. p. 551.

(5) A.U.S.E., 1174 folder: "Diary of the Directorate of Military Historical XII, Automotive Park Sicily from July 7 to 6 august 1943", the day July 26, 1943.

(6) A. Santoni -F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, op. cit., p. 442

of Commander Castagnacci, fell in combat with British ships ⁽⁷⁾.

For their part, the Germans formed on July 17 in Messina a new Naval Command, which counted about twenty of their motor torpedo boats, but using also the basis of Salerno and Crotona to undermine the traffic of enemy supplies belonging mainly to Syracuse.

However, it was a big Italian ship, the modern light cruiser *Scipio Africanus*, to seize the only significant success in this type of naval warfare. In fact, while she was in trip of transfer from Naples to Taranto, she ran into some British torpedo boats in the early hours of July 17, sinking with the artillery on board the *MTB-316* ⁽⁸⁾.

Two other naval clashes occurred on the night of July 20 in front of Gela and west of Capo dell'Armi between German torpedo boats and minesweepers from one side to Allied destroyers and torpedo boats on the other, resulting in damage to two German ships. Finally in the afternoon of July 21, the German submarine *U-81* torpedoed the American Liberty ship *Empire Moon* in the waters off the port of Syracuse.

Beyond the noted decreasing effectiveness of Axis air and naval actions in the second week of the campaign in Sicily, it should be noted that this contribution was not considered sufficient by the commanders of the Armed Forces on the island and by the General Staff of the Army. It is proved by the numerous reminders and almost desperate in vocations for stronger efforts against Anglo-American air and naval formations and the constant demands of Gen. Guzzoni a tactical support to his troops, who failed in truth almost completely.

Just 17 July Gen. Gorlier, special envoy of the G.S.R.E. to the Armed Forces Command Sicily, urged to the Superesercito an "urgent, immediate expansion of our air action" in order to "counter the opposing that has the

(7) UFFICIO STORICO DELLA MARINA: *La Marina italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*: vol. V: : *Le azioni navali dal 1 aprile 1941 all'8 settembre 1943*" Rome 1970, pp. 474-475,

(8) This was the second and last enemy Warship to be sunk with cannon of Italian surface ships during the entire conflict. The first unit was also a English torpedo boat, the *MTB-639*, credited to the artillery of the torpedo boat *Sagittarius* April 28, 1943, although in truth it was finished by the MTB-637 section.

absolute dominion even for deficiency of our anti-aircraft vehicles" ⁽⁹⁾.

Following this last appeal, Gen. Roatta addressed to the *Comando Supremo*, the following message 1132/S of 13:30 the same day, which we believe should be played in full, considering the explicit denunciation of the unsatisfactory Axis aerial-naval action ⁽¹⁰⁾.

"I. -General Guzzoni even consulted Commander Air Force Sicily, formulates the following demands in order of importance, corresponding to a minimum of necessities:

1st) -Forcing the enemy fighter to abandon Sicilian airports carrying on them action of massive bombing,

2nd) -step up action against convoys & means anchored to prevent or hinder influx of reserves;

3rd) - contrast effectively bombing actions & strafing on our rear.

First request has absolutely paramount importance.

II. - General GORLIER, with whom I spoke this morning, fully confirms the above. He adds that if not arise restore as soon as possible a balance between opposing air forces, all our efforts to succeed in Sicily will not come off as fruitless. Today that the enemy dominates undisturbed all hours day & night the battlefield & rear area, with no possibility for us to oppose with either aircraft or A.A. artillery, while the English fleet acts as a multi-day against Catania base with the same tranquility with which he could run a shooting school.

This further underlines the need already set out, not without to add that spend days diminishes our chances of aerial photography, which for most of the subordinate possibility is terrestrial recovery. General Roatta".

This reminder of the reality still not attained any practical result and the same Col. von Bonin, Chief of the G.S of XIV Panzer Army Corps, called it "totally desperate the situation in the skys", then adding the following in its considerations of the Sicilian campaign ⁽¹¹⁾.

"During the four weeks in Sicily this writer saw

(9) A.U.S.E., folder 1503, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", attached 975 radio message of Gen. Gorlier without number, on 02:45 hours of the July 17, 1943.

(10) A.U.S.E., folder 012, booklet 4: Superesercito message n. 1132/5 of 17 July 1943.

(11) A.U.S.E., 2266 folder: "Considerations on the Italian campaign of 1943-1944 Colonel Bogislav von Bonin, Chief of Staff of the German XIV Corps in Sicily," pp. 14-15.

only occasionally, in the early hours of the morning or at dusk, a formation of Me.109 reconnaissance, who were trying, mostly unsuccessfully, to explore the enemy's rear areas. And if the results of the aerial survey were very scarce, there was not any strategic and tactical support to the ground forces by fighting squadrons of bombers and fighters, regardless of a few night raids carried out against those ports of Sicily held by the enemy. The Italian-German air forces were almost as non-existent and the battle for Sicily had to be fought without any support from the air."

2. THE NEW ALLIED OPERATING GUIDELINES

The tenacious resistance that especially the "Schmalz" group and the German paratroopers opposed along the Ionian coast in the direction of the Simeto and contemporary support the American progress towards Agrigento had led since July 13 the Allied leaders to predict a change in their operational plans. In fact, that day Gen. Alexander, anticipating slightly requests for Montgomery in the same direction, he decided to award to the British 8th Army, and more particularly to XXX Army Corps of Gen. Leese, the use of highway 124 from Vizzini to Grammichele, Caltagirone and Piazza Armerina bypasses from the south the plain of Catania and then from the west and the use of which, although not originally attributed either to the US 7th Army, nor to the British 8th Army, was then coveted by both the American 45th Inf. Div. and by the parallel Canada 1st Inf. Div. ⁽¹²⁾.

On the latter highway thus Montgomery pushed his suffering Canadian division, while the US 45th Inf. Div., which was at that time the right wing of the 7th Army of Patton, was forced on July 14 to turn strongly to the left to leapfrog near Mazzarino the US 1st Inf. Div., which has since become the extreme right wing of the American Army ⁽¹³⁾.

It was thanks to this lost the US ability to penetrate to the north and to the island's heart that became possible the influx from the west of the German 15th Div. "Sizilien" and then

(12) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. V: cit., P. 88-89.

(13) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: Sicily and the surrender of Italy, op. cit., p. 220-222.

it's attachment to the "H. Goering" on the already examined the new resistance line.

On July 16, then Alexander, suffering not just the pressure of Montgomery, converted to the clarification of the boundary between the two employees Armies in a new directive, which allowed the English XXX Corps to get around from the west the plain of Catania and therefore the mountain of Etna and asked the US 7th Army only "to protect the flank of the 8th Army" ⁽¹⁴⁾.

There were a few so far controversies stirred by that decision of Alexander, while opening the British XXX Corps a new route that bypasses the strong resistance encountered by the XIII Corps on the way to Catania, nevertheless led to the following negative consequences for the Allies.

1) induced the 7th Army of Patton to bend more to the West, taking away the opportunity to take advantage of the victory achieved in the battle of Gela and flow from the south to north, in order to cut the island in two according to the original plan.

2) He allowed the resulting welding of the Axis mobile forces from the West of the island (first of all recalled the "Sizilien" Div., with units that had withdrawn from the line Gornalunga to the sea ("H. Goering" Div., remnants of the "Livorno" and "Napoli", "Schmalz" group and German paratroopers).

3) He further spread the front of the British 8th Army in the illusion of more quickly way around the mountain of Etna from the west and brought the British new logistical problems.

4) He moved the main English pressure from a flat and coastal land, suitable for use of tanks and the support of naval artillery, to an internal area, rugged and mountainous, perfect for the defenders.

5) Excluding for the moment the Americans from taking part in the capture of Messina, which represented the most prestigious and coveted goal of the campaign, giving fuel to the shadowy discontent of Patton, already ill-disposed towards the British ally who had done better than he did in Tunisia.

6) Those time the Germans to assist the flow in Sicily their entire 29th Panzergrenadier Div. and to prepare new successive lines of resistance.

(14) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. V: cit., P. 107-108

These negative consequences of an imperfect understanding between the Anglo-American allies were not yet perceived by the time in London, where on July 16 Churchill sent to Roosevelt the optimistic letter n. 366 in which the British prime minister expressed himself as follows ⁽¹⁵⁾:

"The HUSKY day events will happen so rapidly, and the crisis of the Italian resistance is so important that the decisions on the toe, the heel and the foot of the boot, which we considered part of HUSKY, will almost finally last, for such work" ⁽¹⁶⁾.

However, he was right in the wounded pride of Patton to give an unexpected positive element to be discussed the Decision of Alexander of 16 July and to give it an unexpected strategic significance. The obvious exception of the US 7th Army the goal of Messina did intact focus the eyes of the ambitious Patton on Palermo, now more within reach following the greater inclination towards the West assumed by the US advanced from Gela and Licata.

Patton therefore authorized after July 13 Gen. Truscott's 3rd USA Inf. Div. to carry the noted "*reconnaissance in force*" of Port Empedocle and Agrigento, then culminated with the conquest of both goals on the 16th, Alexander asked the 17th to be able to push his 7th Army directly on the Sicilian capital. The authorization to that undertaking was given by Alexander the same July 17 during a meeting with Patton in La Marsa in Tunisia and the commander of the US 7th Army immediately conceived an appropriate tactical plan ⁽¹⁷⁾.

He had already split since July 15 its major unit operations in two adjacent areas in the central-western part of the island and is now on the right the II Corps of Gen. Bradley would have pushed to the 1st Inf. Div. towards Enna and Petralia and the 45th Inf. Div.,

(15) F.L. Loewenheim - H.D. LANGLEY - JONES: *Roosevelt-Churchill correspondence secret war*, op. cit., document 243, p. 4

(16) In the same period there was also a close correspondence between the same Churchill and Roosevelt about the political attitude to be taken against Italy and the Sicilian population after the conquest. Cfr. P.R.O. background FO 898, folder 350: *War of 1939-1945. Political Warfare Executive. Post "Husky"*

(17) M. Blumenson: *Sicily: Whose victory?*, op. cit., p. 88.

who had passed over from right to left, of Caltanissetta, Villalba and Termini Imerese. At the same time further west a new 'provisional' Army Corps, entrusted to Gen. Keyes with the 3rd Inf. Div. to the interior and the 82nd Airborne Div. and the Rangers along the coast, would occupy the north-western end of Sicily. Also part of that 'provisional' Corps was the Moroccan 4th Tabor (Battalion), aggregated to the 15th Inf. Regiment of the American 3rd Inf. Div. ⁽¹⁸⁾. In reserve and the final action was held the U.S.A. 2nd Armored Div., then inserted in the Provisional Army Corps, while it was flowing onto the island, to implement a rotation of the actual line, the 9th Infantry Division. Patton then agreed that his 1st Inf. Div. once they reach Petralia, rotated to the right to skirt the British avoidance of Etna from the west ⁽¹⁹⁾.

This happened just as the pitch Italian, as we have seen, had finally decided to move eastward the *mobile* forces of the XII Army Corps.

Finally on July 17 the Allied troops were deployed roughly facing north in the following order from west to east:

- American "Provisional" Army Corps (3rd Inf. Div., 82nd Airborne Div. and Rangers) in charge of occupying the western end of Sicily to Palermo;

- American II Army Corps (1st and 45th Inf. Div.), objective Enna, Petralia and Termini Imerese;

- British XXX Army Corps (Canadian 1st Inf. Div., 231st "Malta" Brigade, Scottish 51st Inf. Div. and new English incoming 78th Inf. Div.) against the positions of Leonforte, Adrano, and Patemò;

- English-XIII Corps (5th and 50th Inf. Div.) against Misterbianco and Catania ⁽²⁰⁾.

(18) SUPPLEMENT TO THE "LONDON GAZETTE" of February 10, 1948: The conquest of Sicily from July 10 to August 17, 1943, official report of Gen. H. R. ALEXANDER.

(19) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: Sicily and the surrender of Italy, op. cit., p. 230-231, 234-236 and 244-245.

(20) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. cit., p. 75-78 and B.L. MONTGOMERY: *Da El Alamein al fiume Sangro*, op. cit., p. 132

3. THE DEPLOYMENT AND THE NEW DISTRIBUTION OF ITALIAN-GERMAN COMMANDS ON 17 AND 18 July (See map n. 24)

On the morning of July 17 saw the Italian-German troops on the following positions from the Ionian Sea to the Tyrrhenian Sea.

- The "Schmalz" Group between the left bank of the Simeto and Favotto bridge on the Gornalunga river with five Inf. Battalions, an art group, a semoventi unit, the Italian XXIX Art. group of 105/28 of the 40th regimental group of the Corp. Art., four bty. 88 mm. and the 304th bty. of 20 mm.
- The "Rebholz" Group of the "H. Goering" Div. between Favorro bridge and Serralunga with two Inf. Battalion, a art. group, a bty. Italian airport of defense of Gerbini, a section from 88 mm. and bty. with six pieces 75 mm. antitank.
- 3rd and 4th Regt. German paratroopers in the second line between the Gerbini airport and Sferro station.
- I/76th Inf. "Napoli" and III/54th Art. "Napoli" in the second line between the stations Sferro and Muglia, under the command of Gen. Conrath of the "H. Goering" Div. ⁽²¹⁾.
- The "Hahm" Group of the "H. Goering" Div. between Serralunga and Prasoprano with two Inf. Battalion, a art. group and a Tank Battalion.
- The "Ohring" Group of the "H. Goering" Div. between Prasoprano and Raddusa with a Inf. Battalion, an art. group, the Italian CX Art. group of 149/13 from the 40th regimental group of the Corp. Art., a Tank Battalion and a Pioneers Battalion. ⁽²²⁾.
- The remainder of the "Livorno" Inf. Div. between the station of Raddusa and the Pirato station, divided into the following parts ⁽²³⁾:
 - Division command at Agira available with the CIX art. group of 149/13 from the 40th regimental group of the Corp. Art.,
 - The group of Capt. Mantovani at hill 311 near Raddusa with a co. of the III/33rd Inf., a co. 20 mm anti-tank rifles and the 81 mm mortar co.
 - The group of Lt. Col. Bruni in locations Pofrella, Grado, north of Raddusa station, with the III/33rd Inf. (less a

(21) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations performed by the I Battalion, the 76th Inf. from 17 July to 1 August 1943".

(22) A.U.S.E., folder 2228: dispatch of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 15/O.P.M of July 17, 1943, with attachment 719/39. See also Folder 1503, annex 975.

(23) A.U.S.E., folder 1506: reports of Battlegroups Bruni, Coco and Mastrangeli, folder 1427, Annex 77 and 2228 folder, attachment 719/38.

TAVOLA N. 24

[illegible]

- co.) the 10th Inf. co. of the formation, a co. and a platoon of 81mm mortars, IV/28th Art. and three sections of the 80th bty. 20 mm;
- The group of Lt. Col. Mastrangeli north of Dittaino station, between Masseria Tuttobene and Vallone Salito, with elements of the II/33rd Inf. and I/34th Inf., a co. 81 mm mortars, III/28th Art. less than five pieces, a bty. of the CIX group from 149/13 to and three 47/32 semoventi;
 - The group of Maj. Coca at Pirato station, south of Leonforte, with the II/34th Inf. and I/28th Art.
 - 15th Div. "Sizilien" gathered under the command of Gen. Rodt on the front Valguarnera -Enna -Villarosa ⁽²⁴⁾.
 - The regimental group of Gen. Schreiber with a part at Alimena (Command 17th CC.NN. Legion, XVII CC.NN. Battalion, 28th Antitank Co. "Aosta", CCXXXIII art. group of 75/27 and two 90/53 semoventi), at a part at Portella Recattivo (remains of the III/30th Inf. "Assietta", a Co. formation of the II/6th Inf. "Aosta", XIX Art. group. "Centauro" of 105/28 and four 90/53 semoventi) and part at Resuttano, located halfway (1 cavalry squadrons "Palermo" group and the first co. motorized machine gun) ⁽²⁵⁾.
 - The "Assietta" Division deployed between Cerda, Roccapalumba, Lercara Friddi, Prizzi and Chiusa Sclafani with the units have already been examined in paragraph 8 of the previous chapter, to protect the transfer to Nicosia of the "Aosta" ⁽²⁶⁾. After carrying out this last movement, even the "Assietta" would withdraw to the protection of Madonie in order to form the resistance line Cerda - Caltavuturo -Petràlia -Gangi -Nicosia.
 - Mobile regimental group West of Col. Ricci with three employee mobile groups "A", "B" and "C" in Villalba, Raffadali and Chiusa Sclafani, who had to cover the movement of the "Assietta".
 - The "Aosta" Division in transferring to constitute the last noted line of defense of Madonie between Cerda- Caltavuturo,

(24) A.U.S.E., folder 2228: phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16578/op of 18 July 1943 addressed to the Command of the Inf. "Aosra" Div. .

(25) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 447, "Report on the feats of arms supported by the tactical grouping of Gen. Schreiber from day 11 to day 21 July 1943". P. 10

(26) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B "Report on the operations of the "Assierra" Inf. Div., P. 6 and p. 8.

Petralia, Gangi and Nicosia ⁽²⁷⁾. The II/5th Inf. "Aosta" and the 10th bty. of the IV/25th Art. "Assietta" instead completed the hedging deployment organized by the "Assietta" a cornerstone in Portella Misilbesi.

- The Coastal contingents and fixed defenses in western Sicily, places under the orders of Gen. Marciani, former commander of the 208th coastal Div., even a task to bar the origins from the hinterland in that area.

On the maritime front, that of eastern Sicily, the responsibility of the XVI, XVIII Corps Art. and the coastal brigade of Gen. Mariscalco was instead dissolved the same July 17 with verbal order of Gen. Rossi, confirmed then by tele 08/9507 of 18 July of the same Corp Command with residues coastal units of the brigade passed then in the employ of the 213th Coastal Div. of Gen. Gotti, while local mobile contingents passed to the disposal of the XVI Corps Command or were aggregated to the 34th Inf. Regiment "Livorno" and the 76th Inf. Regiment. "Napoli" ⁽²⁸⁾.

* * *

On July 18, during an interview with Gen. Hube, who for three before days had arrived in Sicily as commander of the XIV Panzer Corps, Gen. Guzzoni "found logical" demands of his interlocutor, aimed at that "Command Italian XVI Corps cease from having interference on the line held by the German "Goering" and "Sizilien" Divs. at his disposal" ⁽²⁹⁾.

Therefore Gen. Hube was given permission to take, starting at 24:00 on July 18, the direct and complete control of all German forces in Sicily, including the aggregate remains of the "Livorno" and "Napoli"; what we put in the hands of the Germans command and responsibility of the Sicilian eastern front just nine days since the invasion ⁽³⁰⁾.

(27) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 124.

(28) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps," pp. 108-110. ,

(29) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 52.

(30) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 718/23: "Report of the meeting between Gen. Guzzoni, Gen. Hube and Gen. von Senger of 18 July 1943, 19:10 hours", p. 1 and p. 6.

The command of the XVI Corps of Gen. Rossi, who had also left Biancavilla and then had a temporary headquarters in Taormina, preserved from that moment the control of only the coastal units of the sector. He then, starting at 24.00 hours on 19 July, on orders of the Supreme Command, took control and direction of the north-eastern cusp, to the north of Catania, and the Naval Based of Messina, Reggio Calabria, leaving Adm. Barone responsibility for the "technical seamanship part", and of course the Navy Command of Sicily⁽³¹⁾.

Finally, after the orders contained in the phonogram of the Comando Supremo 15111/op of 22 July, the Command of the M Messina -Reggio Naval Base was separated from the Naval Command of Sicily and on the day 27 was placed under the command of Gen. Bozzoni, subordinate to the XVI Corps. At the same time the German Col. Baade officially took over the management of the Strait artillery defense⁽³²⁾.

At the same meeting of 18 July between Guzzoni and German military leaders in Sicily the latter had also requested that the "Aosta" and the "Assietta" were allocated more advanced positions compared to the expected line Cerda - Caltavuturo -Petràlia -Gangi - Nicosia in defense of the Madonie, pointing the way to the Alimena area, where the Italian troops could have provided a more close support to the right wing of the "Sizilien" Div. deployed between Villarosa and Valguarnera.

In this latter regard Guzzoni not estimated to have to change the target of the "Aosta" in the Nicosia area," *because whatever happens there will be a cornerstone with artillery that will ensure a withdrawal*"⁽³³⁾. Instead, he accepted that the "Assietta" advancing slightly its expected positions south of Madonie, touching Alimena, but this was later prevented by the events that we will examine⁽³⁴⁾.

(31) A.U.S.E., folder 2228: dispatch of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16607/op of 22:00 of 18 July 1943 and annexed 719/13; Folder 1506, Annex 27: Circular Command XVI C.A. n. 01/9391/op of 19 July 1943.

(32) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 726/11 and folder 2124/B: "Report of the Command FF. AA. Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 12

(33) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 718/23 of the report on the meeting between Gen. Guzzoni, Gen. Hube and Gen. von Senger, "p. 6.

(34) *Ibid*, p. 5.

At that time the Commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily, although they can no longer resist the will of the Comando Supremo to keep the Madonie, it had not abandoned the idea of a further withdraw on a more contained front. In fact, in a meeting with Kesselring of July 17, he admitted that he had asked the G.S.R.E. to see the possibility of taking "*a more restricted line*", insisting that the "Aosta" and the "Assietta" "*could not keep such a wide front*" ⁽³⁵⁾.

In conclusion it must be said that the long series of orders and counter-which, as we have seen, Italian and German units assailed by from 13 to 18 July will certainly not contribute to alleviating the already serious logistical difficulties, took away time as well as to possible maneuvering space for tactics of contrast or of containment and annul every active readiness of units engaged in endless transfer march under the continuous enemy air pressure. Moreover the constant Anglo-American air supremacy and the transport crisis, and provisioning problems were not unknown to the Command of the Armed Forces Sicily, which indeed referred to them again in that same July 18 with tele-cipher 16588/op directed to Superesercito ⁽³⁶⁾.

Despite these problems, aggravated by the long indecision about the location of the new defensive front, and despite his doubts about continuing to defend the Madonie, at 17:00 of the July 18 Guzzoni sent to all employees Commands circular 16598/op received by the XII Corps only at 18:30, of the 19th. With it he reminded them, of the orders of the Comando Supremo, the task of the 6th Army was to defend Sicily at any cost and to inflict maximum losses on the enemy. Therefore bypassed or overtaken units would have to defend themselves "*to the bitter end by organizing the guerrillas in the territory occupied by the enemy*", having in mind that "*the watchword is sit tight*" and relying on intensification of air protection promised by the Comando Supremo ⁽³⁷⁾.

(35) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 718/25: "Talks between Marshal Kesselring and His Excellence Guzzoni took place on July 17 at 15:40 hours", p. 4.

(36) A.U.S.E., folder 2228: tele of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16588/op of 18 July 1943, 13:00.

(37) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 165: dispatch of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16598/op of 17:00 on 18 July 1943. The encouraging appeal of the Supreme Command had been sent to S.M.R.E. with tele, n. 14950/op of July 17, see, folder 1502, attachment 904.

4. THE FELTRE CONFERENCE

On July 19, Mussolini and Hitler met in Villa Gaggia in Feltre, also present on the German side were Gen. Keitel, von Rintelen, Mackensen and Warlimont and for the Italian the Ambassador in Berlin Alfieri, the Secretary of State Bastianini and Gen. Ambrosio ⁽³⁸⁾. The latter asked Mussolini insistently to say to the Führer that Italy could no longer continue the war. But during the interview, which actually resulted in a monologue by Hitler, the leader of Fascism did not know or did not envisage the above possibility, perhaps because intimately convinced that a separate armistice between Italy and the Allies would not have avoided the application of "*unconditional surrender*" and would particularly attracted the uncontrollable, revenge of the Führer ⁽³⁹⁾.

As we mentioned, the conference represented an opportunity for a long soliloquy of Hitler, who had no qualms in openly condemn the behavior of the Italian Arm Forces in the countryside of Sicily and also accuse finality, the sacrifices made in order to help the Mediterranean ally. All this in the presence of Mussolini that the testimonies define somber, silent and humiliated.

In particular, the Führer recalled that the Luftwaffe had moved into the Mediterranean three Fliegerkorps, even at the risk of homeland defense and lines of communication with the Occupied Territories, from which flowed the necessary raw materials and the provisions ⁽⁴⁰⁾. He then put the accent on the timeliness with which Germany both repaired the runways and aircraft equipment damaged by the enemy, thanks to both the personal sacrifice of the workers, who were not asked to leave even during the most violent bombings, and the existence the decentralization of airport runways. In Italy, however, according to Hitler, he cared too much for the interests of the individual and delayed the expropriated land at airfields, where they were

(38) For the conference see. D. ALFIERI: *Due dittatori di fronte*, Milan 1948 p. 309-316 and F. ROSSI: *Come arrivammo all'armistizio*, op. cit., p. 324-335

(39) G. CASTELLANO: *Come firmai l'armistizio di Cassibue*, Milan, 1945, pp. 55-56 and P. BADOGLIO: *L'Italia nella seconda guerra mondiale, Memorie e documenti*, Milan, 1946, pp. 64-65

(40) A. Santoni -F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, op. cit. p. 430.

supposed to have spaced out the aircraft on the ground, while poor productivity was obtained by civil laborers in the construction of shelters and splinter protection for aircraft.

In this latter regard, the Führer called absolutely unacceptable that in Sicily, "*as a result of the inept and cowardly behavior*" of the Italian staff, the enemy managed to destroy to the ground in one day twenty-seven aircraft and on another occasion twenty-five⁽⁴¹⁾. He stressed that if the same thing had happened on the Russian front, the Luftwaffe would have been a long time on that front inferior to the Soviets.

That Hitler had put the classic finger on the problem is confirmed by Gen. Santoro, who has recognized the significant and negative influence they had on air operations in Sicily the material destruction on flying fields, stating that:

"... Even that possible, more modest collaboration that was in the intentions and hopes of the leaders of the Air Force could be given completely, as a result of the destruction of most of the air units on the fields and the neutralization of these, which seriously hampered the use of residual forces"⁽⁴²⁾.

On ground operations in Sicily Hitler expressed the opinion that they would have more success if there really existed the will to fight and if it was guaranteed by the Italian security in the Straits of Messina. However Germany was ready to grant for the defense of that arm of the sea many anti-aircraft batteries, including those to be 128 mm., Capable of pulled up to a height of 14,000 meters and against naval targets at a distance of twenty-five kilometers.

In a separate conversation between Keitel and Ambrosio the German Field Marshal said himself willing to send to Sicily another two German divisions if the Italians had transferred simultaneously there their many divisions, preferably alpine, and if they had taken a solemn commitment to fight all the way for the preservation of the island. At this precise

(41) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 243.

(42) *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II cit., P. 556.

request Gen. Ambrosio said to be willing to consider the issue of sending more troops to Sicily⁽⁴³⁾.

During the conference, Mussolini was told of the sad news of the contemporary bombing of Rome, targeted by 149 B-17 and 122 B-24, all Americans, in the airport areas of the Littorio and the airport of San Lorenzo. That same afternoon of the 19th then 249 twin-engine American B-25 and B-26 bombed the airport of Ciampino, destroying on the ground eight German planes and two Italians and losing in this circumstance the only two aircraft shot down in the sky of the capital on that day.

The best comment that in our opinion has been written lately about Hitler's aims in the encounter of Feltre seems that the famous historian Deakin, so that it is expressed⁽⁴⁴⁾:

"The meeting of Feltre had demonstrated in no uncertain terms that Hitler did not want to discuss the release of Italy from the war. In essence, his ultimatum was the maintenance of Mussolini at the head of a fake fascist regime because covered by the ephemeral and limited strengthening of the Italian theater: from a military point of view, in order to gain time to organize in central Italy a tenable front against allies on which to retreat in good order; from the political point of view, to take adequate measures in view of the danger of a coup in Rome. "

Returning to the capital, Mussolini, at the insistence of Gen. Ambrosio, he decided to write a letter to Hitler to explain the reasons why he would be forced to no longer fulfill the duties of the alliance, unless Germany further loosened purse strings of his military availability yielding other war material to Italy. The events, however, rushed and the letter did not do anything because of the fall of the same Mussolini on 25 July.

For his part Gen. Ambrosio, who according to Vittorio Emanuele was already some time looking for the opportunity to overthrow Mussolini⁽⁴⁵⁾, shooting strangely interrupted the speech in Feltre with Field Marshal Keitel as against a military buildup not only in Sicily, but the entire southern part of the peninsula. Therefore the chief of the Comando Supremo promised to the O.K.W.

(43) F. ROSSI: *Come arrivammo all'armistizio* op. cit., p. 336-338. See also U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 244

(44) F. W. DEAKIN: *the Stona della Repubblica di Salò*, Torino 1963, p. 413

(45) P. PUNTONI *Parla Vittorio Emanuele III*, Milano 1958, p. 136-137

the O.K.W. between 21 and 22 July a fight to the bitter end in Sicily and on the 24th, the same day of the Grand Council meeting which led to the fall of Mussolini, asked Kesselring, in addition to the simultaneous transfers on the island of the 29th Panzergrenadier Div., sending into Calabria and Apulia, two other Germanic divisions, they would have been the 76th and 305th. In this way -stresses American official report - "*while some Italian intrigued to get rid of Mussolini and the alliance with Germany others, and in some cases the same people, allowed the Germans to strengthen their military oppression in Italy*"⁽⁴⁶⁾.

5. OPERATIONS IN THE SECTOR OF THE XII ARMY CORPS (see map n. 25)

The first Italian unit to be engaged by the new US pressure going back from Agrigento and Port Empedocle was the advanced mobile group "B" at Raffadali of Leut. Col. Mascio, composed of the Command and the 3rd Co, of the CXXXIII 47/32 Semoventi Battalion by, the 6th Co. CII R/35 Tank Battalion, the 1st and 2nd co. of the 488th Mobile Coastal Battalion, the first platoon of the 50th motorcyclists Co., from 6th bty. CCXXX III Art. Group of 75/27 and the 2nd section of the 78th bty of 20 mm.

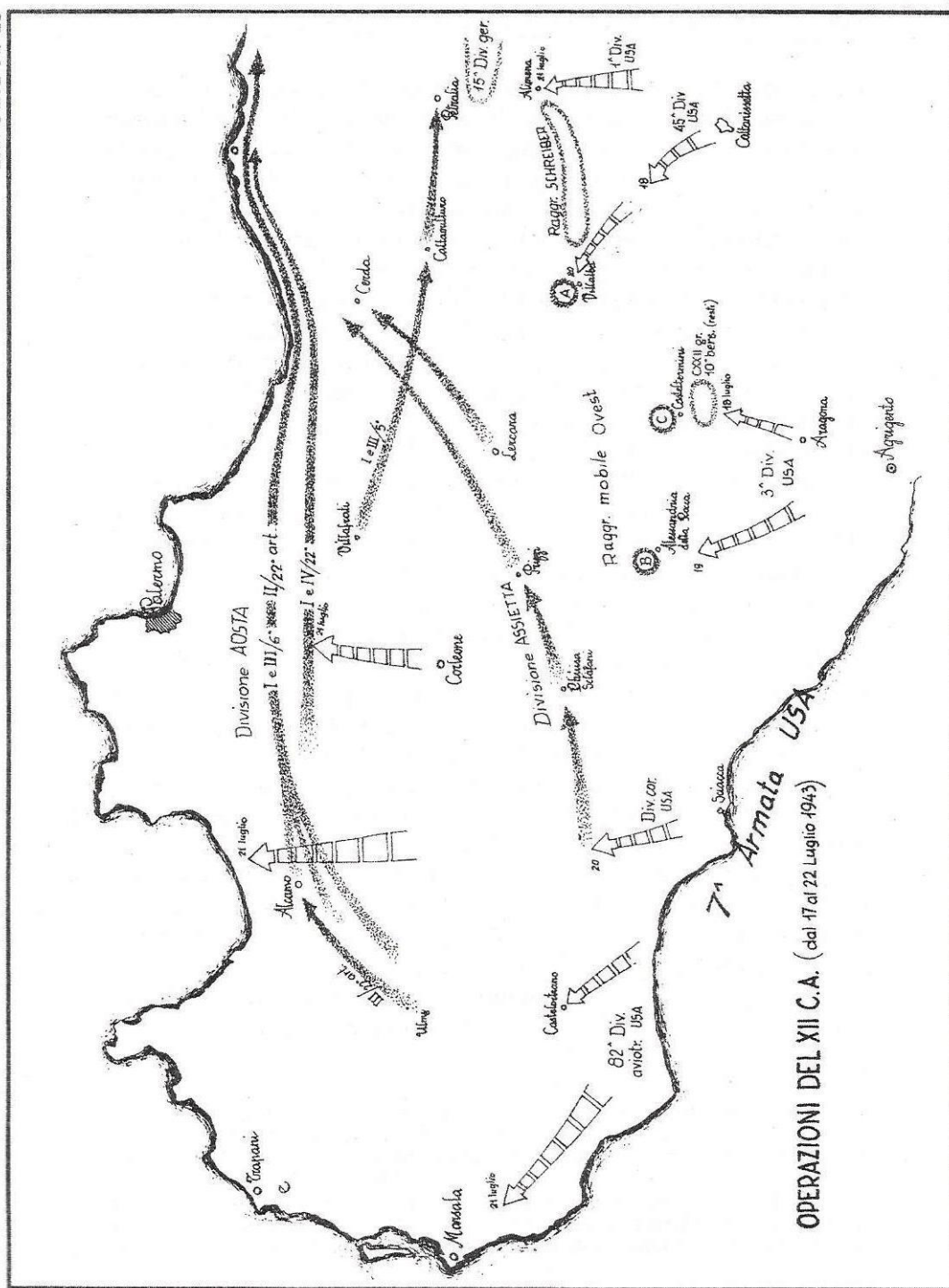
This mobile unit was added to, as is known, the so-called Grouping Mobile West of Col. Ricci, who had the primary assignment (covering on transfer and deployment of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. "During the day of July 17 it repulsed near Raffadali some avant-garde of the USA 3rd Inf. Div., capturing even a few trucks a dozen prisoners"⁽⁴⁷⁾. At the same time the 1st and 2nd bty CXXII group of art. 149/13 commanded by Leut. Col. Thaon di Revel were in position at the Fonduto pass in the Platani Area. protected by Bersaglieri of XXXV Bn, they repulsed at 13:00, 15:00 and 18:00 three American attempts to

(46) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 263

(47) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps" annexed 139 phonogram Command XII C.A. n. 1/9902/op of 20.00 on July 17, 1943.

OPERATIONS OF THE XII CORPS (17 to 22 July 1943)

TAVOLA N. 25



OPERAZIONI DEL XII C.A. (dal 17 al 22 Luglio 1943)

to overcome the pass. The fourth assault the enemy, supported by a large counter-battery fire, the cornerstone, however, was forced to yield, withdrawing at night on Acquaviva station and gathering there with the 3rd bty. of the group⁽⁴⁸⁾.

The day of 17 closed with the two night orders of Gen. Zingales to establish a stronghold in Alessandria della Rocca with an antitank co. of the I Battalion of Bersaglieri of the 208th Coastal Div. and move the mobile unit "C" from Chiusa Sclafani to the crossroads of Cammarata station with a mandate to advance along the valley of the Platani to meet the enemy⁽⁴⁹⁾.

The mobile unit "C" of Maj. Fennel was composed by the 4th Co. the 448th Mobile Coastal Battalion, by the Command and the 5th Co. CII R/35 Tank Battalion, the 2nd Co. CIV 47/32 Anti-tank Battalion, by the 10th bty. IV/25th Art. 75/27 and the 4th section of the 78th bty. 20 mm. It met in the day of the 18th south of Casteltermini vanguards of two regiments of the US 3rd Inf. Div., part of the 'provisional' Corps of Gen. Keyes. During the night the American pressure greatly increased, coinciding with the breakthrough, on the westernmost highway 118, of the "B" mobile unit defenses in Raffadali and I Bersaglieri Battalion at Alessandria della Rocca, who were forced to retreat up to Bivona on the 19th⁽⁵⁰⁾.

Therefore, after a desperate counterattack in the morning, even the mobile unit "C" had to fall back on Cammarata station and leave Casteltermini in the hands of the U. S. A. 3rd Inf. Div. at 17:00 on 19 July. It was in those occasions that Col. Ricci, commander of the entire West Mobile grouping, expressed to the XII Corps command his outrage at the behavior, described as "cowardly and inept", of the Podesta area and the Marshal of the Carabinieri, as well as the "*attitude of the entire population of Casteltermini*" gathering and dressed up in the streets and squares of the town waiting for the enemy"⁽⁵¹⁾.

(48) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 445 bis, "Report on the feats of arms of the XII Corps which took place from 10 July to 2 August 1943", p. 5 and p. 8,

(49) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", p. 69.

(50) *Ibid*, attachments 153 and 154.

(51) *Ibid*, 159. Also attached the same Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps. He noted at the end of the day of July 19 that the now familiar phenomenon of the defections of Sicilian soldiers had also affected the same command of the Army. See. *Ibid*. P. 82

The new line between Bivona and Acquaviva held by the remains of the mobile groups "B" and "C" of the I Bersaglieri, the XXXV Bersaglieri Battalion and the remaining three pieces of 149/13 from the CXXII Art. Group, was attacked the next day, July 20, by the 30th Regimental Tactical Group of the American 3rd Inf. Div., after a massive land and air bombardment. It was then smashed in the early afternoon at S. Stefano Quisquina and Cammarata, where the remains of the two groups 'B' and 'C' ⁽⁵²⁾ were respectively overwhelmed. The few survivors, including the elements of the CXXII Art. Group, retreated north of Lercara Friddi, where the same 20 July, as we shall see later, the USA 3rd Inf. Div. came into contact, and overwhelmed the local contingent of the "Assietta" under the command of Col. Ainis.

The third mobile unit is part of the West Mobile Grouping, that the group "A" of Lt. Col. Perrone, had in the meantime however, as we have seen, the task of protecting the right of the grouping of Gen. Schreiber at Villalba station. It was made up by the Command of the XII Lt Tank Battalion, by the 4th Co., the CII R/35 Tank Battalion, the first Co. of the CXXXIII 47/32 Semoventi Battalion, by 3rd Co. of the 448th Mobile Coastal Battalion, by the 2nd bty. of the CX Art. Group 75/27 and the second section of the 328th bty. 20 mm. and it had been reinforced by 3rd bty. of the XLVIII Art group of 105/28.

At midnight on July 19 mobile group "A", harshly attacked by the 157th Inf. Regiment of the American 45th Div., without entrance, to contrast Caltanissetta the previous day, was forced to retreat from Villalba to Valledolmo. But here it was hit on the 20th and among the ranks were saved only a handful of men and one artillery piece, which passed to the dependency of Gen. Moneta in the cornerstone of Cerda ⁽⁵³⁾.

In conclusion, the Mobile Grouping West of Col. Ricci sacrificed almost completely in an attempt - which was only partially successful as we shall see - to cover the deployment

(52) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", p. 92. in the fighting for Cammarata also took part the 4th Moroccan Tabor. See REVUE HISTORIQUE DE L'ARMÉE: *Le 4^e Tabor marocain en Sicile*, year 1961, n. 2

(53) .U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 445 bis, "Report on the feats of arms of the XII Corps took place from 10 July to 2 August 1943", p. 9 and folder 2011 "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 198.

of the “Assietta”, which in turn protected the long transfer of the “Aosta” in defense of the Madonie.

At 21:30 on 19 July was also started the shift of the command of the XII Corps from Corleone into Mistretta, on Caronie, and then into Mirto between S. Agata di Militello and Patti.

* * *

Along the southwest coast, after the fall of the Sicilian stronghold, just west of Agrigento, was pronounced pressure on July 19 of the U.S.A. 82nd Airborne Div., advancing beyond Platani towards Ribera and then, further inland, to Burgio. So doing this the American Division overcame the defenses on the rear of the 202nd Coastal Div. of Gen. Ficalbi and was slowed in its march only by mine fields ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

The maneuver of the entire “provisional” Corps of Gen. Keyes was very dangerous for the defenders, as it threatened the deployment of the “Assietta” from the South, which in turn covered the transfer of the “Aosta”. In fact, Americans from Ribera and Burgio could easily reach Chiusa Sclafani (as well as from Bivona and Cammarata they would then reached Lercara Friddi) breaking through the deployment of the “Assietta” before it was completed the rail movement of the “Aosta”.

In this regard, at 11:00 and at 18:30 on July 19 Gen. Zingales asked first of all the on-site visit of tactical aviation, but it did not happen ⁽⁵⁵⁾. At the same time Gen. Guzzoni felt the need to warn the command of the XII Corp the “*repetition of the severe inconvenience occurred*” speaking of the untimely sabotage of military works and explicitly forbade “*in the strongest terms any destruction of stockpiles, warehouses, batteries and other materials under the pretext not to leave in the hands of the enemy*” ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

On July 20, Gen. Keyes, that with the 82nd Airborne Div. had occupied that day both Sciacca and Menfi ⁽⁵⁷⁾, obtained by Patton authorize the use in his “provisional” Corps

(54) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: “Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps”, p. 76.

(55) *Ibid*, attachments 157 and 167.

(56) *Ibid*, Annex 158: phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16631/op of 19 July 1943 to direct the Command of XII Corps.

(57) *Ibid*, attachments 200 and 201a and pages. 97-98.

also the U.S.A. 2nd Armored Div., until then held in reserve, as well as to replenish with two Rangers Battalions and the 39th Inf. Regiment of the new 9th Division the "X-Force" of Lt. Col. Darby, promoted to the rank of Colonel ⁽⁵⁸⁾. The 2nd Armored Div. would advance along the valley of Belice aiming directly at Palermo, while "X Force" would occupy together with the 82nd Airborne Div. the western end of Sicily. At the same time the 3rd Inf. Div. would aim at Prizzi and Corleone, then join with the 2nd Armored Div.

* * *

As we saw in paragraph 3 above, the grouping of Gen. Schreiber was allocated to Alimena, to Portella di Recattivo and to Resuttano with the listed units. This grouping had on its left the German 15th Div. "Sizilien" on the Valguarnera- Villarosa front, very close to the old dividing line between the Italian XII and XVI Corps, now overtaken by events and by the new command responsibility granted to Gen. Hube on July 18.

Precisely starting from the 18th the 157th Inf. Regiment of the American 45th Div., belonging to the II Corps of Gen. Bradley, which would then have been right at the northern extremity of the mobile unit 'A' hit with artillery fire on the positions of the "Schreiber" battle group at Portella di Recattivo, causing significant losses to the personnel of the III/30th Inf. and the four 90/53 Semoventi. The US mechanized vanguard, countered by the Italian artillery, which stood in the afternoon at S. Caterina Villarmosa, while new infantry unit belonging to the U.S.A 180th regimental combat group. They tightened up to one kilometer south of the Portella ⁽⁵⁹⁾.

On the 19th, while American artillery intensified their pounding, tactical aircraft attacked several times the positions of the III/30th Inf., destroying one after another all four 90/53 Semoventi. This facilitated the assault of mechanized troops, failed to breakthrough the center, progressed

(58) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 252.

(59) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder, attachment 447, "Report on the feats of arms supported by the tactical grouping of Gen. Schreiber from day 11 to day 21 July 1943", p. 10 See. U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p 233 and p. 249

on the sides of the Italian positions. At dusk after a surprise action allowed the US 180th battle group to conquer Portella del Morto, locations on the rear of the positions held by the III/30th Inf. Therefore at 21:00 Gen. Schreiber, after a failed attempt at containment by the 1st motorized machine gun Co. from Resuttano, ordered the abandonment of the area and the same Portella di Recattivo. The remains of the "Schreibeo" grouping thus all gathered at Alimena overnight, passing subordinate to the Command of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. and being reinforced by three pieces of the German "Fullriede" anti-tank regiment ⁽⁶⁰⁾.

For its part the American 1st Inf. Div., entered Enna and Villapriolo on July 20, sending to Alimena the 2nd Battalion of its 26th Inf. Regt., which it was immediately targeted by the 75/27 guns of the CCXXXIII Art. Group and it was held back at first by mine fields. At 02:00 on July 21, however, the US battalion, with a surprise action, permeated the XVII Camicie Nere Battalion's positions who "retreated without a fight and in disorder" ⁽⁶¹⁾.

A morning counter-attack, developed by III/30th Inf. and supported by the fire of the XIX Art. Group then led to a fierce battle near the town, but Alimena was also circumvented to the northeast by a column of tanks that captured from behind the aforesaid Italian artillery group and determined the isolation and the encirclement of the infantry battalion ⁽⁶²⁾.

The remains of the "Schreiber" grouping were finally overwhelmed at 14:00 of that July 21, while the commanding general was able to evade capture with a few men and with Maj. Bertino and Cingolani, then reaching the village of Buompietro ⁽⁶³⁾.

(60) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 180.

(61) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 447, "Report on the feats of arms supported by the tactical grouping of Gen. Schreiber from day 11 to day 21 July 1943", p. 12.

(62) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 301

(63) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: Annex 447 cited, p. 13.

6. THE LONG PILGRIMAGE OF THE “AOSTA” AND THE “ASSIETTA”

While continued the rail and ordinary transfer of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. to the Madonie area to form the famous front in defense of the north-central part of Sicily. In particular orders issued from the XII Corps Command at 06:30 of 18 July stated that the "Aosta", with the reinforcement of three Corps artillery groups, had *"the task of defending the front of Cerda Station -Sclafani -Caltavuturo - Petralia -crossroads of Gangi - crossroads of Nicosia"* ⁽⁶⁴⁾. Then at 15:00 on the 20th Gen. Zingales reiterated that *"the position of the Madonie is the starting point for the counter-offensive"* ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

The Anglo-American air action delayed the rail transport of the “Aosta” and on July 19 destroyed the Alcamo station the III group of the 22nd Art. Regiment of 75/18 by still standing in that distant position ⁽⁶⁶⁾. So the American avant-garde, broken as we saw the strength of the "Schreiber" group of Portella Recattivo and Alimena on 19 and 21 July, they arrived on this last day in direct contact with the units of the “Aosta” then in Caltavuturo (I/5th Inf., a bty. of the XXI Art. group of 105/28, a bty. of the CXXI art. group of three pieces of 149/13 and a bty of the XLVIII Art. group retreating from Valledolmo), to Casalgirdano (the Assault Co. of the 5th Inf. Regiment and a platoon of the Lt Tank XII Battalion) and at Petralia (division Command, the 5th Inf. Regiment Command, the 22nd Art. Regiment Command, III/5th Inf., a bty. of the CXXI Art. group of 149/13, a bty. of the XXI Art. group of 105/28, the CLI Art. group of 149/19 and by two bty. recently arrived in Sicily) ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

Despite the action of the divisional and Army Corps artillery, the American advance could not be dampened and at 11:10 on July 21, the Divisional Command sent word to Gen. Zingales

(64) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 145: phonogram the XII Corps Command n. 1/9908/op of 06:30 hours of July 18, 1943.

(65) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 180.

(66) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 445 bis. "Report on the feat of arms of the XII Corps held from July 10 to August 2, 1943 ", p. 10

(67) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, "Report on the operation of the “Aosta” Div. in Sicily from July 10 to August 2, 1943," pp 3 & 5.

that the cornerstone of Petralia, attacked from the U.S.A. 1st Div. could resist "only until dusk" ⁽⁶⁸⁾. At this point the command of the XII Corps, which unbeknownst Guzzoni had already issued strict orders at 19:00 on 20 July (received, however, only at 23:00 of the 21st) for a general retreat on Caronie - ordered at 16:00 of the 21st and ultimately on its own initiative the abandonment of the defense of the Madonie and a new deployment overnight on positions between Nicosia and S. Stefano di Camastra ⁽⁶⁹⁾.

Therefore, during the night between 21 and 22 units of the "Aosta" deployed in Petralia and Casalgiordano were to pull back into Nicosia, where they would join the remains of the division already in place. The units deployed in Caltavuturo were instead withdrawn to S. Stefano di Camastra, where they were arriving the I and IV Art. Group of the 22nd Regt. and where they would also then reach Nicosia ⁽⁷⁰⁾.

The effort that was required to troops from sector of Petralla and Casalgiordano was remarkable, since they had to travel about 40 km under the constant aerial attacking action and mechanized units infiltrated.

In fact, the Assault Co. bold and Lt tank platoon allocated to Casalgiordano failed to evade enemy pressure and were overwhelmed before reaching its destination ⁽⁷¹⁾. The same order made the three pieces of the battery of the CXXI Art. group of 149/13 which were at Caltavuturo.

* * *

The "Assietta" Inf. Div. as is known, had the task of covering the transfer of the "Aosta" in defense of the Madonie, occupying with its forces already discussed in the previous chapter (paragraph 8) the cornerstones of Cerda, Roccapalumba, Lercara Friddi, Prizzi and Chiusa

(68) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", pp. 92-93.

(69) *Ibid*, p. 93-94 and Annex 194.

(70) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations div. "Aosta" in Sicily since the day July 10 to August 4, 1943," p. 5. In Nicosia had already arrived to that date I and II Battalion of the 6th Inf., the 47/32 antitank co. from the 6th Inf., sapper co. 6th Inf., II/22nd Art. of 75/27, the 1st bty. of the XXI Art. group of 105/28, the 1st bty. CLI Art. group of 149/19 and DCCCLVII Anti-Aircraft Battalion. See. *Ibid*, p. 4

(71) *Ibid*, p. 5

Sclafani ⁽⁷²⁾. Such long protective deployment was completed still more southwest by the II/5th Inf. "Aosta" and the 10th bty. of the IV/25th Art. "Assietta" at Portella Misilbesi, where there were already a 100/22 bty. from the CCXVIII Art. group and a Battalion of the 202nd Coastal Div..

When the "Aosta" had reached its positions to the west and south of Madonie, even the "Assietta" would move on the same lines. A latter Gen. Guzzoni issued preliminary orders already at 20:00 on July 18, which included to slip of the "Assietta" into Alimena - Petralia area to join the "Schreiber" group and to the right flank of the German 15th Div. "Sizilien" ⁽⁷³⁾.

At 19:00 of July 19, Gen. Zingales ordered early retreat of the Command of 29th Inf. Regt. with its II Battalion from Prizzi into Cerda, as well as CLVII Art. Group of 149/19 to Roccapalumba Petralia, placing them in service of the "Aosta" ⁽⁷⁴⁾. At the same time the cornerstone Portella Misilbesi was ordered by phone to move back into Chiusa Sclafani, both positions, however, deemed in danger the next day, as he says in the official report of the XII Corps Command ⁽⁷⁵⁾.

At 03:30 on July 20 Gen. Guzzoni ordered the concentration of the "Aosta" at Nicosia and the general retreat of the "Assietta" south of Madonie, in any case not to Alimena- where the battle group of Gen. Schreiber was just then undergoing unbearable enemy pressure, but on the Petralia -Gangi junction ⁽⁷⁶⁾.

In the afternoon and in the night of the same July 20 the cornerstones of Lercara Friddi and Prizzi, only partially evacuated, were conquered by the American 3rd Inf. Div., while the following units

(72) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the operations of the "Assietta" Inf. Div., p. 8.

(73) A.U.S.E., folder 2228: "Diary of the 6th Army Military History", dispatch of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16608 / op of 20:00 on July 18, 1943.

(74) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps," appendix 166 and folder 2124/B "Report of the operations of the "Assietta" Inf. Div.", p. 9.

(75) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 445 bis, "Report on the feat of arms of the XII Corps held from July 10 to August 2, 1943", On July 20, p. 9.

(76) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps" attachment 179: tele. of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 1665/op of 03:30 hours of July 20, 1943.

of the “Assietta”, deployed between Roccapalumba and Chiusa Sclafani, they were able to fall back on Cerda: Command 29th Inf. Regt., with I and II Battalion., 30th Inf. Regiment Command with the II Battalion, III/25th Art. less the 10th bty. and all divisional units of Engineers and Services ⁽⁷⁷⁾.

During the night of July 20 it was determined thereafter a rupture in the front of the “Assietta”, which in turn was protecting the hold of the “Aosta” position to the west and south of Madonie. On this occasion there was the total loss of the following units:

- at Portella Misilbesi II/5th Inf. “Aosta”;
- at Chiusa Sclafani III/29th Inf. “Assietta” and IV/25th Art. “Assietta”;
- at Prizzi the LI Bersaglieri Battalion and II/25th Art. ;
- at Lercara Friddi the I/30th Inf. “Assietta”, a bty. of the III/25th Art. and a bty. XLVIII of the Art. group of 105/28.

Therefore already shown almost complete sacrifice of the Mobile Grouping West of Col. Ricci between Bivona, Acquaviva and Valledolmo was not sufficient to save from destruction or capture almost half of the “Assietta” division.

The other barrier protecting the “Aosra” consists of the battle group of Gen. Schreiber was about to be overwhelmed, as we have seen, between Portella di Recattivo and Alimena, which opened an even more dangerous because of enemy penetration towards the Tyrrhenian and threatens to cut in two the current deployment of the “Assietta” – “Aosta”.

So on the evening of July 20 Gen. Guzzoni issued decisive guidelines for the total abandonment of the defense of the Madonie, which lasted for such a short time, and for a withdraw on Caronie and then towards the northeastern cusp of Sicily, which had long focused the eyes of the Commander of the island’s Armed Forces.

In fact, with phonogram 16679/op of 19:00 hours of July 20 - But come, as we have already mentioned, at the XII Corps Command then transferring only at 23:00 on the 21st and delivered in addition to Gen. Zingales in Mirto at 09:30 of the 22nd - Gen. Guzzoni ordered to set up a new front from S. Stefano di Camastra on the Tyrrhenian into Nicosia.

It had to be set up also a second line even more behind from S. Agata di Militello to Cesarò, destined to be prolonged

(77) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B "Report of the operations of the “Assietta” Inf. Div., p. 11.

with the help of the Germans until to Adrano and Acireale, who was to become "the last line of defense to the bitter end."

Finally, only temporarily and in the withdrawal of coverage to the east they still had to be held the positions of Collesano, Polizzi and Petralia on the Madonie ⁽⁷⁸⁾.

For his part Gen. Zingales, as we have seen, although he had not yet received these important provisions of the Armed Forces Command Sicily, ordered at 16:00 on 21 July, the new deployment of the "Aosta" and "Assietta" right in between S. Stefano di Camastra and Nicosia ⁽⁷⁹⁾.

On the morning of July 22 this maneuver could be said to be completed, under the protection of barricades set up by the 19th miners Co. As we have said in this same paragraph, the remains of the "Aosta" were made to flow into S. Stefano di Camastra and into Nicosia, while the remaining units of the "Assietta" deployed as follows:

- positions rearward of S. Agata di Militello: Division Command, 30th Inf. Regt. command and the 25th Art. Regiment, II/30th Inf. and 18th Subsistence section;
- S. Stefano di Camastra: Command of the 29th Inf. Regt. with its I and II Battalion and two bty of the III/25th Art. of 75/27;
- road barrier just to the west of the latter locations: two bty. CXXI group of Art. of 149/13 ⁽⁸⁰⁾;
- Mistretta: CLXXI Battalion of the 171st CC.NN Legion of the "Aosta", but before dawn on the 22nd defected completely ⁽⁸¹⁾.

On the same day of the 22nd, the Armed Forces Command of Sicily moved from Step Passo Pisciaro to Portella Mandrazzi then on to Pelorirani.

Meanwhile the defense in the Tyrrhenian front between the Piletto stream and the Milicia stream, west of Cefalu, was put on the evening of July 20 in the employ of Gen. Angelica, with operating headquarters in Campofelice. The coastal sector between. Piletto stream and

(78) A.U.S.E., folder 2228: phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16679 / op of 19:00 on July 20, 1943 and folder 2011: "Historical Military Diary of the XII Army Corps", Annex 197.

(79) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps," pp. 93-94 and Annex 194.

(80) The road junctions between Nicosia from S. Stefano di Camastra and from S. Agata di Militello were also protected by anti-tank pieces of the German 15th Div. "Sizilien" See. A.U.S.E., folder 2011 "Historical Military Diary of XII Corps", p. 93.

(81) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps" pages. 95 and 97 and Annex 195: communication of 08:00 on July 22, 1943.

Marina di Caronia was placed instead under the command of Consul Giua, Command based in S. Stefano di Camastra. Coastal defenses would serve in place of existing troops and stragglers gathered in unit formations. Finally, the 136th Coastal Regiment would continue to protect autonomously the land front in the stretch between Mount St. Calogero (Termini Imerese) and Misilmeri, where it would be connected with the land front in Palermo ⁽⁸²⁾.

7. THE FALL OF PALERMO AND WESTERN SICILY (See map n. 25)

The advance of Gen. Patton on Palermo began on July 18 with the left wing of his II Corps, represented now by the 45th Inf. Div., who occupied without opposition Caltanissetta and then swept the next three rounds, as we know, the mobile group "A" in Villalba and Valledolmo and the battle group of Gen. Schreiber at Portella di Recattivo and Alimena, this last place conquered in collaboration with the II/26th Inf. of the US 1st Div..

At the same time the so-called "provisional" Army Corps of Gen. Keyes, overcame with the 3rd Inf. Div. the Italian mobile groups "B" and "C" in S. Stefano Quisquina and in Cammarata and the 82nd Airborne Div. the strong-points of Burgio, Sciacca and Menfi, quickly progressed to the northwest, making use also of the reconstituted "Force X" of Col. Darby, formed by two Rangers Battalions and the 39th Inf. Regt. of the new 9th Division,

The void that the U. S. 3rd Inf. Div. met in particular in addition to, the cornerstones of Lercara Friddi and Prizzi, fallen as it is known on the night of the 20th, allowed this US units to easily win Corleone in the morning of July 21, and mainly to walk 87 kilometers in thirty-three hours ⁽⁸³⁾.

For its part the "Force X" Col. Darby found on July 21 the forts guarding the lower reaches of the Belice completely abandoned and captured the same day Castelvetro, where, according to the American official report, 400 Italian soldiers surrendered to

(82) *Ibid*, Annex 187: Hand phonogram of the XII Corp n. 1/9922/op of 21 July 1943.

(83) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 298-299

an exploring enemy patrol without firing a shot⁽⁸⁴⁾. The total assessed prisoners captured by "Force X" in only 21 days reached the figure of 4000⁽⁸⁵⁾.

The biggest threat came always from the American penetration into the Tyrrhenian coastal highway #113, reason why the command of the XII Army Corps had proposed to Gen. Guzzoni since 21:10 of July 20 that "while remaining firm the concept of the defense to the bitter end at Palermo, the three divisions of the coastal sector (202nd, 208th and 230th), leaving a nucleus of resistance on the coast, they directed for the Caltavuturo-Cerda front, taking with him the greatest number of transport"⁽⁸⁶⁾.

These proposals were approved by the Armed Forces Sicily command with phonogram n. 16695/op of 11:45 am of July 21, however, received by General Zingales at 21:50 of the 22nd⁽⁸⁷⁾. Already however, since the 19:00 of the July 20, with notes and important provisions for the establishment of the new front on Caronie, Guzzoni had recommended "that you can withdraw more artillery from Palermo and surroundings"⁽⁸⁸⁾.

Received the above-mentioned message of assent of Guzzoni n. 16695/op at 21:50 on the 22nd, Gen. Zingales ordered at the same time the 202nd Coastal Div. (with instructions to disclose that order to the other Coastal Div. defenses and to the ports of Trapani and Palermo) to leave only a nucleus of resistance about the proficiency coast and collect the largest number of vehicles and heavy weaponry first in Palermo and then eastward along the Tyrrhenian coast, but, unbeknownst to him, he had already been cut off by the American 45th Inf. Div.. This order could not be effected or, in some cases not even reached the recipients, because of the hastening of the war in western Sicily⁽⁸⁹⁾. He

(84) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 252-253.

(85) *Ibid*, p. 253.

(86) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 186: phonogram Command XII Corps. 1/9923/op of 21:10 of 20 July 1943.

(87) *Ibid*, Annex 218: phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16695/Op. of 11:45 hours of July 21, 1943.

(88) *Ibid*, said Annex 197: dispatch of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16679/op of 19:00 on July 20, received by the Command XII Corps transferring to Mirto at 23:00 on 21 July.

(89) *Ibid*, p. 103 and Annex 219.

recalls in this regard that the command of all troops remaining in the latter sector had been entrusted since July 18 to Gen. Marciani.

To ensure the "defense to the bitter end" in the Port «N» area of Palermo, entrusted to Gen. Molinero, they had been concentrated by July 20, five Coastal Battalion., two machine gun Co., a 81 mm mortar Co., a group of dismounted cavalry, ten machine gun platoons, eighteen anti-aircraft batteries, three of which also the ability to shoot anti-ship, a bty. of 100/22, the I/25th Art. "Assietta" of 100/17, eighteen loose antitank pieces, a chemicals Co., a telegraphers Co. and a formation consisting of regular soldiers of a Radio Officers course⁽⁹⁰⁾.

In the night on the 20th and during the day following the Prefect of Palermo, the Federal Secretary of the Fascist Party and most of the officials and hierarchs left the city, while groups of citizens rose up against the of the Intendenza military warehouses⁽⁹¹⁾.

On July 21, the American 3rd Inf. Div. and the Rangers of Col. Darby entered Alcamo and captured in place the entire command of the 208th Coastal Div., a few hours later that the population of the town was given to the looting of a train, and that the Police were forced to open fire on the crowd⁽⁹²⁾.

Learned of the fall of Alcamo, Gen. Molinero reinforced the defense of the Portella Torretta, originating of this town, with an Inf. Co. and a bty. of the I/25th Art., then skip doing predisposed road blocks at the same Portella and at Passo Renda.

At the dawn of the 22nd the Harbour Master personnel he embarked for Naples and the commander of the airport of Palermo blew some stores, while many batteries were abandoned by the staff without being made unusable.

So it was quite easy for the 7th Regimental Tactical Group of the American 3rd Inf. Div. to seize Portella del Mare and Portella della Paglia, where was overwhelmed a Inf. Co. supported by a piece of 100/17, and to enter Palermo

(90) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, file 2124/A "Report Command Armed Forces Sicily from 15 June to 20 July 1943", p. 49

(91) S. ATTANASIO: *Sicilia senza Italia, luglio-agosto 1943*, op. cit., p. 137

(92) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", p. 88.

17:00, along with the units of the 2nd Armored Div., including the jubilation of the population. Gen. Marciani was taken prisoner by part of the American 82nd Reconnaissance Battalion and Gen. Molinero agreed at 19:00 of that on July 22 the formal surrender of the city met Gen. Keyes in the Royal Palace. Palermo was thus the first European capital to be conquered or liberated by the Allies ⁽⁹³⁾.

On the same day of the 22nd the US 45th Inf. Div. touched the most to oriente'f Tyrrhenian beaches at Termini Imerese. So between the 23rd and 24th were occupied by the U.S.A. 82nd Airborne Div. and by "Force X" and the 2nd Armored Div. Calatafimi, Marsala, Castellammare and Trapani, where Adm. Manfredi surrendered with 5,000 men to Gen. Ridgway. In this circumstance the only episodes of resistance worthy of note were that of the 225th bty. of the VII Art. group of the 202nd Coastal Division, under the command of Capt. Carniniti, and that of the XII Coastal Group, whose commander, Lt. Col. Sommaruga, was awarded the gold medal in memory ⁽⁹⁴⁾.

By 24 July the entire western Sicily thus fell into the hands of the 'provisional' Army Corps of Gen. Keyes, who paid what he called "a nice walk" with the modest figure of 57 dead, 170 wounded and 45 missing, against 2,900 Italian soldiers dead or wounded and 53,000 prisoners. The booty was then 189 guns, 359 vehicles and 41 tanks ⁽⁹⁵⁾.

From that moment and until the end of the campaign the U.S. 2nd Armored Div., the 82nd Airborne Div. and "Force X". They were removed from the front and used in garrison duties in western Sicily, while according to the new directives of Gen. Alexander on 23 July the rest of the US 7th Army, ie the 1st, 3rd, 45th and newcomer 9th Inf. Div., would have to support the British 8th Army, going along the Tyrrhenian coastal highway n. 113 and the parallel inner highway n. 120 between Petralia, Nicosia, Traina and Cesarò. The start date of this new operational phase, agreed between the two allied armies, was not to be later than 1 August. ⁽⁹⁶⁾

(93) M. Blumenson: *Sicily: whose victory?*, op. cit., 92 and U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 254.

(94) E. Faldella: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit., page 229

(95) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 255; W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. cit., p. 79 and M. Blumenson: *Sicily: whose victory?*, op. cit., p. 93

(96) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: op. cit., p. 120 and p. 122-123

* * *

Other controversies, after those concerning the Augusta-Syracuse naval base, were raised about the failure to make port of Palermo unusable, as well as the failure to "defend to the bitter end" the city.

From 18:20 on 15 July, the Armed Forces Command of Sicily had communicated to the Command of the XII Army Corps that Mussolini had ordered the filling of access to the port of Palermo⁽⁹⁷⁾.

At 23:00 on the 16th Gen. Zingales, who answered confirming that the port of Palermo had already prepared the interruption of the south jetty and that before the 17th and 18th would be ready the mining of the breakwater and the north pier, while it was not considered feasible the fill of the mouth of the port, given the considerable mass of materials required and not immediately available on site. Gen. Zingales then concluded by suggesting that the Royal Navy prepare the sinking of boats to block the middle entrance and held other vessels ready to block the residual passage at the right time.

At 15:00 of July 21, at the approach of American troops to the capital of Sicily and on specific invitation of the S. M. R. E. [Italian Army General Staff], Gen. Guzzoni communicated to the Command of the XII Corps and to the Naval Command of Sicily that Superesercito demanded that the Palermo harbor be "immediately destroyed"⁽⁹⁸⁾. This order was then issued by the commander of the XII Corps to Port Defense Command "N" on the morning of the 22nd, whether through motorcyclists and truck-mounted relays, both by radio and by phone, this latter undertaking was however in vain due to the interruption of the lines⁽⁹⁹⁾.

For its part, however, the Armed Forces Command. Sicily had arranged at 18:00 of that July 21 to send to the XII Corps Command, the Naval Command of Sicily and Port Defense Command "N" another marconigram, which again and curtly ordered him to arrange for the port of

(97) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 16: phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16484/op of 18:20 hours of July 15, 1943, received by the Command of the XII Corps at 16:30 of the July 16, 1943.

(98) *Ibid*, attachment 204, phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16706/op of 15:00 on July 21, 1943, received by the Command of the XII Corps at 09:30 hours of July 22, 1943.

(99) *Ibid*, p. 103 and Annex 208.

Palermo be immediately destroyed" ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. In the margin of the copy of the latter marconigram, also received on the morning of July 22 by the XII Corp Command, the Chief of the G.S. of Guzzoni, Gen. Faldella also wrote with his own hand the recommendation: "Please send this order to Defense Command Port 'N' in the event that the radio message was not received. It's *urgent*. "

The XII Corp Command, after having provided to send to the Defense Command Port 'N' the hand phonogram n. 1/9932/op with orders to implement "urgent destruction Port Palermo" ⁽¹⁰¹⁾, assured Gen. Guzzoni with another hand phonogram which the provisions of the order 16706/op of 15:00 on July 21 had been transmitted to the Sicilian capital by means of motorcyclists ⁽¹⁰²⁾.

After all these hopeful messages the same thing, that is, the self-destruction of the port installations in Palermo, and despite the general orders issued as long ago as July 15, in place no one took the necessary measures so that the port of Palermo was found by the American troops just shattered from the previous bombing and not for the "unused" preordained demolition.

On the non-use of the port of Palermo and the same ease with which the city had been occupied by the enemy the S.M.R.E. expressed a harsh judgment, demanding explanations on 30 July ⁽¹⁰³⁾. Therefore at 11:20 on 31 Gen. Guzzoni posted the following stern marconigram 17027/op to the command of the XII Corps ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾:

"With the marconigram 16545/op on 17th current where I ordered that defense of harbor "N" be made to the bitter end under the orders of Gen. Molinero. With marconigram 16706/op on 21st current, following order

(100) *Ibid*, Annex 206: marconigram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16747/op of 18:00 on July 21, 1943.

(101) *Ibid*, Annex 207: Hand phonogram the XII Corp Command n. 1/9932/op of 22 July 1943.

(102) *Ibid*, Annex 209: Hand phonogram the XII Corp Command n. 1/9937/op of 22 July 1943.

(103) A.U.S.E., folder 2228: telegram by S.M.R.E. n. 1/17048/P of 30 July 1943.

(104) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 189: marconigram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 17027/op of 11:20 hours of July 31, 1943.

of Superesercito, I ordered immediate destruction of Palermo harbor. Conversely, despite the above orders the city of Palermo was not defended & the port would be found intact in the occupation. Please tell me:

- Orders given by V. E.,
- Investigation findings,
- Names of officials responsible.

It is understood that all the commanders, high & low, they had to deliver resistance on site, although overrun, & they instead retreat, & who are currently within our front, must be taken into consideration & they should be referred the General Court.. Those, however, remained in the opponent's hand, so prove guilt as those listed above, must be reported to this command so that their position can be conveniently examined in the future. "

Gen. Zingales replied at 14:00 of 1 August with the phonogram 1/10148/op, which listed the five occasions when, between 16 and 22 July, the XII Corp Command had given instructions for the defense to the bitter end to Port 'N' Defense Command and the Command of the 202nd Coastal Div. It was also confirmed by Gen. Zingales the urgent radio transmission by wire and through couriers of the order for "immediate destruction" of the port of Palermo in the morning of the 22nd, but it was also revealed that motorcyclists would be stopped by German patrols in Bagheria, since the enemy had reached Acqua dei Corsari. The commander of the XII Corps finally concluded admitting the inability to report any offenders, since all the commanders had fallen into enemy hands, except for a superior officer to the troops of the airport, for which the complaint was ongoing at the war Court ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾.

From the Allied side we have the testimony of Commander Barnes, commander of the American 15th PT boat Squadron, which at 08:00 of July 23 docked with his boats in the port of Palermo, certainly could not distinguish the destruction caused locally by air raids from those that may be caused by sabotage, but noting however that " underground tanks for fuel on Monte Pellegrino, with a capacity of nearly one million barrels (142,000 mc.) were intact and so was intact the pipeline that linked them to the harbor. ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾.

(105) *Ibid*, Annex 409: phonogram of the XII Corps Command no. 1/10148/op of 14:00 on August 1, 1943.

(106) S.E. MORISON: *History of U.S. naval operations in World War II*, vol. IX: cit., Italian translation by the S.M.E., pp. 294-295

The amount of damage, however caused to the capital's port until that moment, however, was not to be of great magnitude if since July 27 Palermo was allocated to the American TF. 88 composed of two cruisers and six destroyers, if already on July 28 six merchant docked simultaneously at wharves and if in August were landed in the Sicilian capital 44,878 men, 118,231 tons of material and 6,361 vehicles ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾.

8. OPERATIONS IN THE AREA OF THE ITALIAN XVI ARMY CORP AND THE GERMAN XIV ARMY CORP (See Map n. 26).

On the eastern front of the Axis deployment, to be clear that from the mouth of Simeto up to Villarosa and where the majority of on-line troops had become German, the day of July 17 was marked by fierce fighting in the area north of Primosole, where the English 50th Inf. Div., backed by the 4th Armoured Brigade, once in firm possession of the disputed bridge, forced the "Schmalz" battle group to fall back in its entirety for the first array on the line of the Bottaceto trench.

The following day, 18 July, however the 231st "Malta" Brigade and the Scottish 51st Inf. Div. attacked the positions held by the remains of the "Livorno" division, that between the stations of Raddusa and Pirata constituted the cornerstone of conjunction between the "H. Goering" and the "Sizilien" (see Paragraph 3 above).

The Group of Capt. Mantovani was swept from hill 311 near Raddusa by the 231st "Malta" Brigade, while the battle group of Maj. Coca was made to withdraw from the Pirato station on the southern outskirts of Leonforte.

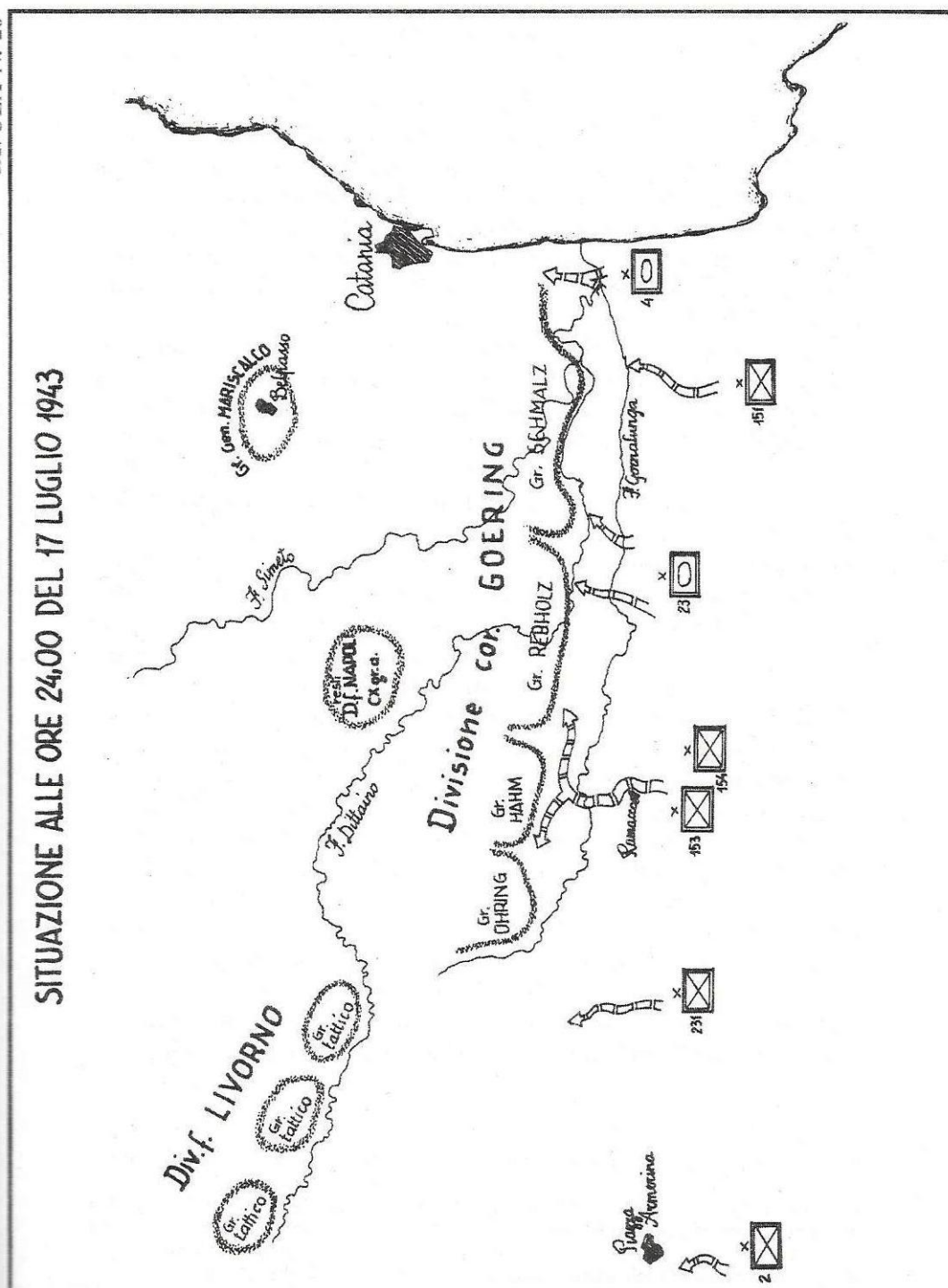
Following this enemy penetration, which threatened the right flank of the "H. Goering", Gen. Conrath sent reinforcement to the "Livorno" a company of German pioneers, which took position south of Portella Grado along with the battle group of Leut. Col. Bruni ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾. But even this stronghold was overwhelmed on the night between 18 and

(107) *Ibid*, p. 295 and U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 256.

(108) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 99 quater: "Report of the operations carried out in the sector of XVI Corps from 10 to 20 July 1943". Page. 20

TAVOLA N. 26

SITUAZIONE ALLE ORE 24,00 DEL 17 LUGLIO 1943



19th with a surprise action by British sappers and Leut. Col. Bruni could barely save themselves along with some survivors and six of the artillery pieces of Capt. Scimè ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾.

It is therefore verified the dreaded dangerous gap between the "H. Goering" and "Sizilien", deployed between Valguarnera and Villarosa, with great concern of Gen. Hube, who -as we know - starting at 24:00 on the 18th withdrew from the Italian XVI Corp command of all German troops as well as the remains of the "Napoli" and "Livorno". However, instead of withdrawing immediately "Sizilien", as Guzzoni would have liked, the Germans bridge the gap with some elements of a Battalion of the incoming 29th Panzergrenadier Div., reinforced by heavy batteries, resisting opposite Valguarnera-Villarosa for another thirty-six hours ⁽¹¹⁰⁾.

At the same time, with phonogram 16652/op of 20:30 of 19 July, Gen. Guzzoni asked the command of the Germanic XIV Armoured Corps wished to withdraw as soon as possible from the line of fire the now exhausted remnants of the "Livorno" ⁽¹¹¹⁾. The latter however were only for the withdraw now on the following new positions of the front:

- Command of the division transferred from Agira to Traina;
- Tactical group of Leut. Col. Mastrangeli (elements II/33rd Inf., and I/34th Inf., a 81 mm. mortars Co. with six weapons, the III/28th Art. less than five pieces, a bty. of the CIX art. Group of 149/13 and three 47/32 Semoventi) backward from the Dittaino station south of Assoro, with the artillery in the Agira area and all the dependent units of Leut. Col. Ens of the German 15th Div. "Sizilien";
- Tactical group of Maj. Coca (II/34th Inf. and I/28th Art.) withdrew from Leonforte and placed to the east of Agira to the employ of the same Germanic "Ens" battle group
- elements of Engineers on the Agira -Nicosia highway, elements of Health divided between Assoro, Leonforte, Agira and Traina,

(109) A.U.S.E., folder 1506: "Report on the operational activities of tactical group Bruni 10 to 19 July 1943", p. 4.

(110) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 719/36. The 29th Panzer Division was now flowing regularly into Sicily using an autonomic ferry service organized by the Germans.

(111) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 719/31: phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16652/op of 20:30 hours of July 19, 1943.

units of transportation Service from Nicosia, Assoro and Traina and nucleus of Subsistence in Troina ⁽¹¹²⁾.

On July 20, however, the Mastrangeli battle group left for Assoro, under orders of Capt. Iannarone, one Co. formation, two mortars platoons and the three Semoventi, that in the night of the 21st were swept away by the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. The rest of the Mastrangeli battle group withdrew into Nicosia and then to Cesarò, where it was dissolved, and the elements sent to Castel Umbeno for rest and reorganization ⁽¹¹³⁾.

In vain they were requested by the Armed Forces Command of Sicily to the G.S.R.E. for the sending of replacements and of materials to replenish the "Livorno" division on the island. The few remains of this glorious division, even in the rear, it was not until July 29 the joined the 185th Paratroopers Regt. "Nimbus", newly arrived in Sicily with 2,000 men and 18 pieces of 47/32, however the subsequent provisions for the evacuation of the island prevented in these units to get into the line.

As of July 22, therefore, the only combat contingent of the "Livorno" Inf. Div to remain on the front was the tactical group of Maj. Coca, placed in the 104th Panzergrenadier Regt. of Leut. Col. Ens.

* * *

On the right of the "Livorno" division meanwhile continued a British offensive which, according to the known intentions of Gen. Alexander, aims to go around from the west the plain of Catania and mount Etna, using the XXX Army Corps of Gen. Leese.

In this area, the Canadian 1st Inf. Div., after occupying Piazza Armerina on July 17, ran into strong positions of the "Sizilien" Div. in Valguarnera, failing to progress beyond when, following three days of fighting ⁽¹¹⁴⁾. However, as we know, the fall of Portella di Recattivo defenses held by Gen. Schreiber and of Portella Grado held by Lt. Col.

(112) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 719/38 and folder 1506, annex 28.

(113) A.U.S.E., folder 1506: "Report on the operational activities of tactical group Mastrangeli" p. 4 and file 2124/B "Diary of the Sicilian campaign of the 34th Inf. Regiment. "Livirno". P. 12

(114) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 117 and file 2229 "Daily Bulletin of July 20 of the German XIV Corp Command".

Bruni, threatened from both sides the advanced front of the "Sizilien", and then on July 20 Gen. Rodt was forced to withdraw the 104th Regiment of Lt. Col. Ens between Leonforte and Agira and the 129th Regiment of Lt. Col. Fullriede on the juncture between Petralia-Gangi.

But against this alignment made headway the American 1st Inf. Div., who that same July 20 occupied the evacuated Enna and the next day overwhelmed, as we have seen, the battle grouping of Gen. Schreiber at Alimena. Precisely as a result of the latter reverse Gen. Rodt adopted a bold decision, he in fact at 23:30 on 21 July, while the whole western Italian front was backing away from the Madonie to Caronie, sent his two battle groups "Neapel" and "Fullriede" even to the northwest and north of the same Madonie, that is, respectively, between the sea and Gratteri and near Castelbuono. In doing so these two German battle groups of the "Sizilien" Div. formed a Western Front much more advanced than the one assigned to the "Aosta" and to the "Assietta" between S. Stefano di Camastra and Nicosia (115).

But in doing this long transfer the Germans found themselves short on vehicles and they demanded 40 from the Italians (116). Today we also know that some Germanic commands authorized formally in that circumstance dependant units "to motorize with motor vehicles from those non-combatant Italians" (117). This caused most unpleasant incidents between soldiers of the two Axis countries, including the prominent killing of German Leut. Hans Strotz by the Secretary of State for Agriculture Spadafora, who defended his vehicle from an attempted expropriation.

The other battle group of "Sizilien", formed by the 104th Panzergrenadier Regt. of Leut. Col. Ens, instead was to reject the renewed attempts at break through of the Canadians between Leonforte and Agira. In two days of very heavy fighting in the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. lost 275 men, but in the evening of 22 July finally succeeded

(115) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 721/22: "Daily Bulletin of the German 15th Panzer Div." 23:30 of 21 July 1943.

(116) *Ibid*, "Bulletin of the day July 22, 1943.

(117) F.M. SENGHER und ETIERLIN: *Combattere senza paura e senza speranza*, op. cit., p. 244.

(118) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: op. cit., p. 119.

Further east, on the southern front, more properly said, the "H. Goering" Div., divided into three battle groups described in paragraph 3 above, meanwhile, it faced the attacks of the Scottish 51st Inf. Div.. Here on the morning of July 20 the I/76th Inf. "Napoli" of Leut. Col. Parrabbi, deployed between the stations of Sferro and Muglia under the orders of Gen. Conrath, suffered the loss of the 1st Co. of Capt. Randisi, overwhelmed by units of the 153rd Scottish Brigade.

Different fortunate was the day following the parallel 154th Scottish brigade, supported by the 23rd Armored Brigade and a sustained bombardment, in the early hours of the 21st temporary penetrated the line of the "Rebholz" group at the Gerbini airport. Soon after, however, a counter-attack, led personally by Capt. Rebholz with six tanks and a company of infantry, restored the situation, pushing on their starting points the Scots who lost 178 men and eight tanks ⁽¹¹⁹⁾.

Were also rejected in the day, in that same sector other offensive raids conducted by the 153rd Scottish Brigade, this time against the German paratroopers between Gerbini and Sferro station ⁽¹²⁰⁾.

Meanwhile the night between the 19th and 20th the command of the XVI Corps, now in sole charge, to direct the coastal units, including the Messina – Reggio naval base, had moved to Castanea delle Furie ⁽¹²¹⁾. On July 21, Gen. Rossi inspected the Calabrian sector of the Messina -Reggio base dependent on him, drawing from "very unfavorable impression" in regard to both the moral, and the organization of control, and the status of the units. ⁽¹²²⁾.

(119) *Ibid*, p. 117.

(120) *Ibid* p. 1:16 and A.U.S.E, folder 2228, attachment 721/21, "The Daily Bulletin of the "H. Goering" Div. 19:00 hours of 21 July 1943".

(121) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 123. The coastal units then present in the XVI Corps sector were the 213th Coastal Div. and the XIX Coastal Brigade, which had been joined by units recovered from the 206th Coastal Div., and from the XVIII Coastal Brigade and the fixed and mobile defenses of the eastern airports. See. A.U.S.E., folder 1427, annex 99 quater: "Report of the operations in this sector of the XVI Corps from the 10th to 20 July 1943: P.20.

(122) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 721/25: dispatch of the XVI Corps No. 10/9450 of 21 July 1943.

9. ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION BY THE ITALIAN MILITARY LEADERSHIP

A first interesting testimony on the appreciation of the situation in Sicily during the period under consideration is given to us by the report of Gen. Guzzoni to Superesercito n. 16692/op of 19 July ⁽¹²³⁾.

In this document, the Commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily, after illustrating the known measures and the deployment of the forces available on that date, he highlighted the following main points.

- Remarkable shipping crisis because of "the almost suspended the ferry in the Strait", which is why stocks were quickly depleted, limiting self-sufficiency in food for eight days, four days for medicines and to two-three days to fuels, while some batteries had already had to cease fire for lack of ammunition.
- The continuing phenomena of confusion and desertion, aggravated by the already denounced the case of "self-styled Sicilian volunteers", who were trying to transit from the mainland to the island not for its defense, but "for their own interests". In confirmation of the above was the fact that among the stragglers who flocked to Messina and attempted escape from the island "there were no Sicilians". However they had been made in this regard four concentration camps for stragglers, which would be used to cover the losses of combat units or to form workers units.
- The civilian population depicted as a "hostile when not indifferent" and ready to give "aid to British paratroopers, providing abundant, accurate information about location of commands and units."
- Severe wear and high losses caused to the moving Italian units from unbeatable opponent air supremacy, while it was clear the inferiority of our arms to that of the Germans and the enemy.
- Need to send reinforcement to Sicily a new motorized division with large supply of anti-tank means, which would be used as an Army reserve, and an Alpine Division

(123) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 719/39.

relieved to be deployed at the turn of the Cape Orlando – Randazzo highway, in defense of the last Sicilian landing strip. The fulfillment of this request for aid would according to Guzzoni, also a defined "moral" consequence, that is, to increase on the island the descending number of Italian fighting troops against the now prevailing number of German soldiers deployed in the front line. Among other things was then flowing into Sicily, as is known, also the 29th Panzergrenadier Div., which employed by the Germanic XIV Corps of Gen. Hube would have constituted mass of maneuver, but rather that the purpose to be deployed on the front lines on the advanced front between the Madonie and Caronie.

The problem sending of any aid to Sicily was discussed in Rome in the following days and on 21 July the Supreme Command concluded that it would be moved to the island "a mountain or infantry division when the supplies had been secured" ⁽¹²⁴⁾. Moreover Gen. Ambrosio urged the next day the Germans to complete the transfer into Sicily of their 29th Division, not that of others paratroopers units and new coastal and anti-aircraft batteries ⁽¹²⁵⁾.

On July 21, the Armed Forces command of Sicily defined the tasks of the three corps present on the island along the new defensive line running from S. Stefano di Camastra on the Tyrrhenian to the mouth of the Simeto on the Ionian Sea with a German formation forward deployment in the Madonie. Considering the importance of these provisions, which opened a new phase in the defense of Sicily, we have seen fit to reproduce them in full in the appendix (appendix n. 12) ⁽¹²⁶⁾.

Meanwhile flocked to the Armed Forces command of Sicily statistical reports on the losses suffered during the first ten days of fighting by two Italian Army Corps. It was still defined leakage rates "approximate", as they were mentioned in a reminder of the Armed Forces Command Sicily under the date of July 20, which does not

(124) A.U.S.E., folder 1503:, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", annexed in 1186 phonogram of the Supreme Command No. 15074/op of 21 July 1943.

(125) *Ibid*, annexed in 1240

(126) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 721/20 worksheet of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16703/op of 21 July 1943.

also it specified the classic division between the dead, wounded and missing ⁽¹²⁷⁾. Here is a table:

- Troops and Army services loss of 35% of the actual
- Troops and XII Corps Services loss of 15% of the actual
- "Aosta" Inf. Division. loss of 25% of the actual
- "Assietta" Inf. Division. losses equal to 30% of the actual
- Troops and XVI Corps Services loss of 20% of the actual
- "Livorno" Inf. Division loss of 60% of the actual
- "Napoli" Inf. Division losses equal to 80% of the actual
- 213th Coastal Division losses equal to 1-2% of the actual
- XIX Coastal Brigade losses equal to 1-2% of the actual
- Other coastal units overrun by the enemy: data missing.

On the burning issue of the difficulties associated with the transfer of aid to Sicily, the Supreme Command returned on July 22, asking the General Staffs of the three Armed Forces the reasons for the disorganization of the Italian transport in areas of Messina and Reggio Calabria, in contrast to the constant efficiency German Services. Consequently Adm. Barone was responsible "for the traffic between the Sicilian and Calabrian coasts, as well as movements to the ports and the beach yet in our possession", with the task of communicating daily "to the Supreme Command and Superesercito data about kinds of material entities and units ferried daily to the island" ⁽¹²⁸⁾.

The examination of the needs of the Italian-German troops in Sicily and the contemporary possibilities for their reference and improvement formed the subject of a meeting that same July 22 was held at Palazzo Vidoni ⁽¹²⁹⁾. At that meeting it emerged immediately that the Germans were then capable of ferrying daily with their landing craft 700 trucks and 700 tons of materials and that they would be willing to carry with this system even 500 tons of Italian materials a day, as long already loaded on trucks. Therefore the services of the Royal Navy and the Royal Army

(127) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: Memo of the Armed Forces Command Sicily of 20 July 1943 entitled "Losses incurred to the date of 20 July 1943".

(128) A.U.S.E., folder 1503 "Historical Diary of the Supreme Command", annexed in 1242: dispatch of the Supreme Command No. 1861/UT of 22 July 1943 addressed to the three G.S. of the Armed Forces.

(129) A.U.S.E., folder OP2 cartage 28, "Summary of the meeting attempt of July 22, 1943 in Palazzo Vidoni".

was entrusted the ferrying of the remaining 700 tones considered necessary to satisfy the daily needs of the island. Most of the supplies would cross the Strait of Messina, while only 450 tons per day had to come by sea from the ports of Campania.

This meeting therefore ended with the optimistic statement that, without the necessary reservations about the unpredictable enemy air and naval contrasts, it was "possible to supply the Sicilian bridgehead" ⁽¹³⁰⁾.

In transmitting the next day to the three General Staffs of the Armed Forces the minutes of that meeting, the Comando Supremo communicated that the Strait of Messina would be better protected with anti-aircraft and anti-ship from "the promised German media," while it would be the task of Superesercito and of Supermarina "to strengthen significantly and as soon as possible the A.A., and A.S. defense of the port of Milazzo", which served as a hub for maritime coastal traffic. Supermarina should also enhance their own Strait defense systems, ensure that they were more efficient at least twenty landing craft and immediately send sailors for loading and unloading services, taking them from Sicily or the mainland ⁽¹³¹⁾.

Admiral Barone, for his part, would continue "to have the overall direction of all traffic through the Strait, as ordered with sheet 1861/UT of the 22nd current." Because finally it was necessary to fit into the already proven German trafficking organization both road and ferry, was asked to set appropriate criteria of collaboration "in order to avoid friction or misunderstanding" ⁽¹³²⁾.

An equally optimistic view of the logistical problems related to Sicily was soon expressed by Lt. Col. Bonzani, that between 19 and 24 July accomplished a mission on the island on behalf of the Traffic Office of the Supreme Command. In fact his report, after a series of considerations and directions, ended with the following words of trust ⁽¹³³⁾:

(130) *Ibid.*

(131) A.U.S.E., folder 1503 "Historical Diary of the Supreme Command", folder of the Comando Supremo no. 1889/VT of 23 July 1943 addressed to the three General Staffs of the Armed Forces.

(132) *Ibid.*

(133) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/A, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command": Report on the trip to Sicily made by Leut. Col. Bonzani Cesare between 19 and 24 July 1943.

"In summary, from what I have seen, I consider the overall situation and particularly the traffic in the Strait allows you to ensure the amount of transport required at this time (between 19 and 24 July. note) for refueling of Sicily, even if these were to take place only through the Strait by complete abstraction from the real and proper maritime traffic."

In light of that meeting at Palazzo Vidoni and the report of Leut. Col. Bonzani, it seemed in short, that Guzzoni was wrong when, as we have seen, complained on July 19 a major transport crisis for Sicily because "the near suspension of ferries in the Strait" ⁽¹³⁴⁾.

But if the Comando Supremo, believing that it had found the solution, in those days did not seem much concerned about the transport crisis in the Strait reported by Guzzoni, different was his reaction to renewed complaints expressed by the Commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily, in the same report of 19 July, the recurring phenomenon of desertions and confusion among the soldiers and the hostility of the population.

In fact, on 22 July the Comando Supremo asked the three General Staffs of the Armed Forces, "a complete and accurate picture of the determinants of the Sicilian painful events" ⁽¹³⁵⁾. They were also given an opportunity with some specific items on which the three General Staffs should have to report more promptly; namely:

- Remote and immediate causes of the insufficient defensive organization in Sicily;
- The degree of enhancement of local defenses during the course of the Tunisian campaign;
- Evolution of the assessments made in Rome and in Sicily from 15 June 1943 onwards on enemy intentions and predictable landing operations;
- Resulting in location of the Armed Forces on the islands and on the mainland;
- Detailed reports of each General Staff about the events of 9 to 20 July;
- Reasons and explanations on the different effectiveness of the Germanic than Italian Transportation Service ⁽¹³⁶⁾.

(134) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, attachment 719/39: phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n.16692 / op directed to S.M.R.E.

(135) A.U.S.E., folder 1503 " Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", annexed in 1246: dispatch of the Supreme Command No. 15114/op of 22 July 1943.

(136) *Ibid*

CHAPTER XI

RESISTANCE IN THE NORTHEAST CUSPIDE

(July 23-August 5)

1. THE AIR-NAVAL ACTIONS BETWEEN 23 JULY AND 5 AUGUST

With the already examined retreat to the continent of the Air Force Command of Sicily (July 21) the remaining runways of the island were used only as a stopover for all types of Italian plane coming mostly from Sardinia, while -as is was also mentioned -at the date of July 27, also the 4th Air Fleet based in Puglia "ceased virtually every offensive action"⁽¹⁾. As a result since then eventually operate offensively on Sicilian skies almost exclusively German aircraft, as we shall see below.

The first success of the Axis in the period considered, however, was about the German underwater weapon, namely the submarine *U-407*, of S. Leut. Brüller that at 13:41 of July 23 with a torpedo damaged the British cruiser *Newfoundland* en route from Augusta to Malta under the escort of three destroyers and in the company of another cruiser. The hit ship however was able to reach its destination, albeit with damaged steering, while unfortunately two hours later the Italian submarine *Asczanghi*, who had tried in vain to torpedo the three enemy destroyers intent to carry to the north of the search for the U- boot, was located by them,

(1) G. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale* Vol. II cit., P. 551.

subjected to hunt, forced to surface and then sank ⁽²⁾.

The Germans had to suffer a loss on those days at sea, that of minesweeper *R.186*, engaged in the search for castaways paratroopers from ten Ju. 52s shot down north of the Messina Strait by British "Spitfires". The minesweeper was attacked by enemy bombers on July 25 off the coast of Spadafora and had to be run aground on fire which completely destroyed it ⁽³⁾.

In the skies the 2nd Luftflotte spent the night between 24 and July 25 eighty-six bombers into the Syracuse area, seventy-three the following evening against Malta and forty-four at 09:30 on July 26 against US ships off the coast of Palermo. On this last occasion the Americans again lament the untimely intervention of their air force and were left without air cover during the forty minutes of the raid. Luckily for them, however, despite the exaggerated reports of German pilots, only the destroyer *Mayrant* was damaged by bombs dropped near the hull ⁽⁴⁾.

The same July 26 Augusta was targeted by fourteen F.W.190 attackers and Syracuse was bombed after dark from eighty Ju.88, which also employed the Italian special FFF motor-bomb. This raid led to the sinking of the British ship *Fishpool* and the loss of five German aircraft.

The Luftwaffe attacked again Syracuse on the nights of 27 and 28, sinking the English landing craft *LCT-353*, but suffering the most serious overall loss of eleven aircraft. Seven other Ju.88 were the price of a raid on the city of Avola, carried on the night of July 30 by fifty German bombers, three of whom also had to return due to mechanical problems,

The 2nd Luftflotte had by now only the useless objective of hammering the landing ports for enemy supplies and

(2) A. Santoni -F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*: op. cit., p. 438.

(3) Other inconclusive actions, which involved Italian torpedo boats, are in vain by the deaths on 30 and on July 31, See. UFFICIO STORICO DELLA MARINA: *La Manna italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*: Vol. V: *Le azioni navali dal 1 aprile 1941 all'8 settembre 1943*, op cit., pp. 475-476.

(4) S.E. MORISON: *History of U.S. naval operations in World War II*, vol. IX: cit., Italian translation done by the S.M.E., p. 298

it could do little for the tactical support to the troops and to counter the enemy naval activity, totally undisturbed by the Italian fleet. In this regard, on July 28 the Comando Supremo asked Superaereo and O.B.S. to interdict to the "frequent Anglo-Americans naval fire actions on the right side of our deployment and along the northern coast of Sicily", as well as continuous and "undisturbed massive actions of bombing, of strafing and machine-gunning on the front and on the rear" ⁽⁵⁾. But even in those circumstances the appeal Gen. Ambrosio fell on deaf ears and the Luftwaffe continued the usual raids on ports in enemy hands, attacking on the 1st and 4th August, the bay of Palermo, where it was sunk the British steamer *Uskide* and damaged the American destroyer *Shubrick*, for a total of eight German aircraft.

While virtually absent at that time from the skies of Sicily, the Italian Air Force, through the mouth of his Chief of the General Staff Gen. Fougier, to get ready an "appreciation of the situation at 20:00 of the day July 24, 1943", in which the aviation was absolutely nothing and that was rather strange, but for those days also symptomatically, only terrestrial problems. Given the importance and also the acuteness of that report, we believe appropriate to reproduce it in full below ⁽⁶⁾.

"Transmits to you the following appreciation of Superaereo on the situation at 20:00 on July 24, 1943, XXI.

After the abandonment of the central-western region of Sicily the Italian-Germanic troops to remain for positions with semicircle, resting on Madonie (He remembers only "provisionally", ed.) And the southern foothills of Caronie and of Etna. It is determined as a front of somewhat less than that held in the days before extension. It offers successive defensive ability, given the mountainous nature of the land behind. Access routes, to the action exercised by the opponent's armor, do not allow a large deployment of stressed out means. The use of the latter, then, is to consider possible in a rather restricted areas and with little effectiveness.

However, lacking an deep defensive field organization, is not to discard the possibility that one of the prevailing forces of infantry and

(5) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/A: "Historical Journal of the Comando Supremo" radio message of the Comando Supremo No. 51665/op of 13.00 on July 28, 1943

(6) A.U.S.E., folder 1504: "Historical Journal of the Comando Supremo", annexed in 1143 telepresso of Superaereo n. 1562 July 25, 1943, addressed only to the Comando Supremo and Supermarina.

cavalry on the ways of penetration (highways) chosen is able to create gaps that can allow the irruption of large armored units. Dropping them to the wrong side of the main positions would cause resistance, in the sectors, interested, they collapsed, in part, in any case the effect that would have on the functioning of the Services in the immediate rear.

All in all: the resistance, be unable to attend the facts mentioned above, and it reflects the contrast exercised by the Anglo-American G.U. in direct contact with the similar antagonistic, it can be long or relatively long. Last less if the enemy and succeeded in the attempt, will arrive in force, with the assistance or not of paratrooper, in one or more of the behind the coastal areas of the deployment, that is S. Stefano di Camastra, - S. Agata di Militello, Cape Orlando, Falcone-Barcelona, Tumefreddo. Those zones branching roads that penetrate the territory held by the Italian - Germans, compartments. Whence the possibility of isolating the troops in the line and to paralyze the activity (operation) particularly devolved to the reserves.

The above considerations assume that opponents intend to address fully the problem and solve it as soon as possible and at any cost. But if in their operational plan the human factor (the economy of forces) has the prevalence (ie greater importance) on the time factor, then they are likely to land in Calabria to get the complete isolation of Sicily. Supplies by air and sea of men, of certain weapons and various materials will always be possible, but with great risk, some with heavy losses, in any case inadequate doses to the needs. The resistance would end up running out for insufficient food.

In the meantime various sources of information, through O.B.S., agree with the action attribute of the enemy thoroughly against Sardinia and Corsica on the event of the total occupation of Sicily. In this regard it is to be pointed out that along the Tunisian coast and occupied Sicily and Malta seems focused landing craft capable of carrying out the transport of about 6 divisions (Task Forces). The aforesaid action is therefore possible. Its strategic importance, especially for the direct consequences that would ensue to the mainland of Italy damage (air offensive intensification) has already been considered and therefore it does not do the subject, now, of particular plot. GENERAL FOUGIRE "

Apart from the acute tactical observations, this long memo of the Chief of the G.S. of the R. Areonautica then restated, fifteen days later landing in Sicily, the old fear of an upcoming invasion of Calabria, Sardinia and Corsica. This helped to fuel the already known confusion in strategic evaluations, and implying the criterion of a dispersion of defensive energies, did nothing but play to the Anglo-Americans.

On part of the Supreme Command compiled on 1 August, the picture of availability of the Air Force, the II Fliegerkorps in Italy and the Royal Navy. The situation was as follows ⁽⁷⁾.

R. Air Force	Aircraft		Crews Available	
	Available	efficient	for daytime activities	for night actions
Types of aircraft				
Bombers and assault	215	88	131	54
Torpedo bombers	60	15	51	50
Fighters	545	291	500	71
Land scouts	269	167	286	0
Maritime scouts	245	114	89	25
TOTAL	1,334	675	1,057	200

The German II Fliegerkorps, however, stipulated in Italy (as of July 25) of 329 bombers and assault, 139 fighters, 125 transport and 86 other type of aircraft, for a total of 679 aircraft.

The Navy, in turn, possessed as at 1 August 1943 the following ships ⁽⁸⁾:

Type of ship	available	ready
Battleship	7	3
Cruisers	13	6
Destroyer and explorers	33	12
Former French destroyer	6	0
torpedo boats and corvettes	70	30
Submarines	58	26
M.A.S.	48	23
Motor Torpedo Boats	35	12
V.A.S.	23	12
TOTAL	293	124

(7) A.U.S.E folder 1504/B: "Historical Diary of the Supreme Command", August 1, 1943.

(8) *Ibid.* Of the 26 Italian submarines ready, four were in the Atlantic.

2. LAND OPERATIONS FROM 23 TO 26 July

After the American conquest of Palermo and western Sicily, Gen. Patton, according to the already mentioned new directives of Gen. Alexander of July 23, oriented four divisions of his 7th Army, (1st, 3rd, 45th and 51st Inf. Div.) against the northern sector of the new Italian-German defenses, leaving the British 8th Army of Montgomery to strike into positions around Mount Etna. Axis deployment on new lines of resistance had materialized on July 23 from north to south as follows.

1) Advanced Line held by the German battle groups "Neapel" and "Fullriede", respectively, on the line joining Cefalu-Gratteri and Castelbuono-Petralia in the Madonie. It was also located to the west of the front of the "Assietta" and of the "Aosta" on the Caronie that at 22:50 of 22 July Guzzoni asked the XII Army Corps Command because the German forces were present in the Petralia area, already evacuated conversely by the troops of Gen. Zingales⁽⁹⁾. These advanced positions of the two German fighting groups were later reinforced by the tactical group "Ulich" consisting of the 15th Inf. Regt. of the arriving 29th Panzergrenadier Div. of Gen. Fries, sent there on his own initiative by General Hube and deployed at the shoreline.

2) Front held by the remains of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. of Gen. Scotti between S. Stefano di Camastra and Mistretta on the Caronie, distributed as follows.

- At Santo Stefano di Camastra: Command of the 290th Inf. Regiment with the I and II Battalions and III/25th Art. Regt. of 75/27 with two batteries. These units were reinforced, by order of the XII Corp Command, by the 50th and 52nd Motorized Machine Gun Co., by the 11th and 12th bty. IV/22nd Art. "Aosta" of 75/13, and by the 2nd bty. of the I/22nd Art. of 75/27 "Aosta", by the 301st and 302nd bty. of the LXXV Art. Group of 75/06, the 2nd bty. of the XLVIII Art group of 105/28 and two bty. of the CLVII Art. Group of 149/19⁽¹⁰⁾. On July 23

(9) A.U.S.E. folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Army Corps", attachment 226: phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16745/op of 22:50 hours of July 22, 1943

(10) A.U.S.E. folder 2011, attachment 236: phonogram of the Command of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. n. 2497/op of 23 July 1943: "defensive layout at S. Stefano di Camastra."

the self same also flowed to S. Stefano di Camastra some units of the German 29th Div. with eleven tanks ⁽¹¹⁾.

- A barrier on the road intersection to the west of the crossing of S. Stefano di Camastra, prepared with two Btys of the CXXI Art. group of 149/13, however, later found to be "non-existent" ⁽¹²⁾.

-At Caronia the Division Command.

-At S. Agata di Militello Command of the 25th Art. Regt. and the Command of the 30th Inf. Regiment with its II Battalion, which on July 24 was commissioned to provide a barrier between the bridge over the Furiano river and Pizzo S. Filio, to protect S. Fratello.

-At Mistretta on CIXXI. CC.NN. Battalion of the 171st Legion, as we have already said, it disintegrated to the defections on July 22. More defections were reported the 23rd in the same combat units of the "Assietta" Div., especially among the elements of Sicilian origin ⁽¹³⁾.

At Mistretta was appropriated on July 24 also the new German tactical group "Kuhn" made up a Inf. Battalion and a antitank Co., which would operate as a suture with the right wing of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. on the Colle del Contrasto ⁽¹⁴⁾.

3) The front of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. of Gen. Romano between Colle dei Contrasto, Monte Sambughetti and Nicosia. It was defended by the following units: Command of the 5th Inf. Regiment. with I and III Battalions, Command of the 6th Inf. Regiment with I and III Battalions, DCCCLVII anti-tank Battalion, II/22nd Art. 75/27, a bty. of the CXXI Art. group of 149/13, 2nd and 3rd bty. of the XXI Art. group. of 105/28, CLI Art. Group of 149/19 with two bty., CLXII Semoventi group of 90/53 of the 10th grouping of Col. Bedoya ⁽¹⁵⁾.

4) The south western corner of the front between Nicosia, Nissoria, Agira and Solfara Campana, entrusted to the German "Ens" battle group that absorbed the Coco group of the "Livorno" Div. (II/34th Inf. and I/28th Art.) And that, as we have said, held the suburbs of

(11) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 242.

(12) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. from July 9 to August 13, 1943 ", p. 13.

(13) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 236 mentioned above and Annex 232: phonogram "Assietta" Inf. Div. Command n. 2501/op of 23 July 1943.

(14) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, the command tele XII Army Corps n. 1/9988/op. of July 24, 1943.

(15) A.U.S.E. .. folder 2011, attachment 239: phonogram of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. Command n. 2267/op of 22 July 1943 "Organization in defense of Nicosia positions (included) Mistretta (VAT)."

Leonforte until the evening of July 22, then having to fall back on the road to Nissoria under the strong pressure of the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. ⁽¹⁶⁾.

In such a sensitive area a Company of the 29th Panzergrenadier Div. was also flowed to buffer the hole opened after the fall of the known strongholds manned by the groups Iannarone, Bruni and Mantovani of the "Livorno" between Assoro and Raddusa.

5) The South Front between Catenanuova and Gerbini, held by the German "H. Goering" Armored Div., which also included the remains of the I/76th Inf. "Napoli" and newcomer Germanic 923rd Fortress Regt.

6) Eastern Front between Gerbini and the sea, guarded by the German battle group of Col. Schmalz and the German paratroopers.

The general order regarding this new front between Caronie and the Ionian Sea south of Catania once again provided a "resistance to the bitter end," as I myself became known from Gen. Guzzoni July 23, stating laconically that "you fight until the last and do not give up" ⁽¹⁷⁾. What's more, the Armed Forces Command Sicily restated during the 24th the aforementioned categorical order of resistance, ruling that the S. Stefano di Camastra - Nicosia line" does not fall back, do not give up, but it resists until the last man" ⁽¹⁸⁾.

In this regard they were made available by the German-Italian Engineers numerous roadblocks and extensive minefields in front of the new alignment ⁽¹⁹⁾.

* * *

(16) *Ibid.* attachment 231, HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit., P. 119.

(17) A.U.S.E. folder 2228 radio message of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16783/op of 22:30 of 23 July 1943.

(18) A.U.S.E. folder 2011, radio message of the Armed Forces Command Sicily or. 16796/op of 24 July and phonogram of the XII Corp Command to the "Aosta" and "Assietta" Inf. Div. n. 1/9978/op of 24 July 1943.

(19) On 23 July, the Engineer Command of the XII Corps. communicated with tele n. 1/9175 the following location of available units: At Acquadolci the Command of the XII Artisans Battalion with two Co.: At Capo Orlando XIX Artisans Battalion Command with three Co.; At Caronia Marina the CIV Miners Battalion; At La Rocca the 7th Artisans Co. and the 126th Workers Co. and being transferred from Messina to Milazzo and then to Acquadolci the 35th Workers Co.. See: A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 240.

While on the southern and eastern front of the "H. Goering" Div. and the "Schmalz" group resisted the renewed attempts of a British breakthrough, backed by air and naval bombardment, the delicate central sector, after the fall of Leonforte remembered by the Canadian 1st Inf. Div., the 231st Brigade "Malta" invested in the early hours of July 24, the cornerstone of Solfara Campana, south of Agira, held from 7th Co. reinforced of the II/34th Inf. of the Coco group and the 4th Co. belonging to the German 15th Panzergrenadier Regiment of the 29th Division ⁽²⁰⁾. The attackers succeeded, after three hours of fierce struggle, to win that position, overwhelming a platoon of Italian soldiers and forcing the survivors of the 7th Co. "Livorno" and the German 4th Co. to retreat just south of the highway 121 Agira -Regalbuto, where the Coco group established three new areas of cornerstones on a front of 12 kilometers. After this battle the 7th Co. of the II/34th Inf. was left with only three officers and 40 NCO's and enlisted men, and were missing a total of 124 men ⁽²¹⁾.

On the northern front, the Germans advanced tactical groups "Ulich" and "Neapeb" were subjected on 24 and 25 July, the pressure of the American 45th Inf. Div., which, after reaching the Tyrrhenian Sea near Termini Imerese on the evening of the 22nd, progressed along highway 113, winning Gangi Petralia on the 23rd and the following day. The northern German front retreated so on July 25 on the final line Finale - Pallina - Barella - S. Mauro Castelverde - Castel di Lucio - Sperlinga - Monte La Guardia, expanding southward to protect Nicosia on highway 120 ⁽²²⁾.

During the 25th the "Fullriede group" unleashed a series of counterattacks for possession of three heights between Gangi and Sperlinga, inflicting heavy losses to the US 16th and the 26th Inf. Regt. ⁽²³⁾. Along the Tyrrhenian coast, on the other hand, the "Ulich" group rejected on days 25 and 26 six consecutive attacks of the U.S.A. 180th Regimental Combat Team

(20). 29th Panzergrenadier Div. completed his arrival in Sicily between 26 and 27 July. See. A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 10.

(21) A.U.S.E., folder 1506: "Report on the operations carried out by the battle group of Major Coco 10 to 31 July 1943." P. 3-4.

(22) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Army Corps", attachment 271.

(23) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 313-314

between Pizzo Spina and the Pallina creek. But in the end the Germans were forced to fall back in this sector on the new positions of Castel di Tusa-Pettineo, as it had to report the XII Corps Command Army of Gen. Guzzoni ⁽²⁴⁾. On this occasion the artillery of the "Aosta" intervened in support of the German troops, undergoing a violent enemy counter-battery fire, but also attracting praise from German commanders for their effectiveness ⁽²⁵⁾.

Unfortunately, on July 24 the command of the same "Aosta" Inf. Div. had been forced to report back to Gen. Zingales the worrying depletion of the units due to the increasing desertions - phenomenon ⁽²⁶⁾. On that occasion, it was announced by Gen. Romano that "alarmist rumors propagated among the population, and the panic that in some areas had spread rapidly across the units" had meant assumption of arbitrary absences "an impressive crescendo, which threatened seriously affect the efficiency of the individual units". In particular it was stated that there were about 200 men in each of two infantry regiments deployed in the Nicosia area, which had been "wholly" the defection of CLXXI CC.NN. Battalion and the 171st Machine Gun Co., who were missing about 30 men in both the Engineer and in the command unit of the 22nd Art. Regiment, 12 men in the XXI Art. Group, 13 men in the CLI Art. Group and 4 men in the 328th 20 mm. bty., and described himself as a "significant" number of defections in the I, II and IV Artillery Group. Finally, 136th Subsistence Section had literally "disappeared."

In sending to the Command of the Armed Forces of Sicily the aforementioned report, Gen. Zingales pointed out on July 26 also the situation of defections within the "Assietta" Inf. Div., which had reached 20% of the actual ⁽²⁷⁾. Command of the same "Assietta" had in turn reported on July 24 that even in the ranks of the 435th Coast Battalion of the XIX Brigade and those of the N.P.A. of

(24) A.U.S.E., folder 2228: radio message of Command XII Corp n. 01/10015/op of 26 July 1943, and U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, Op. cit., p. 316-318.

(25) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 445 bis, "Report on the feats of arms of the XII Corps taking place from 10 July to 2 August 1943", p. 15

(26) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 265 bis: and folder 2228: phonogram Command "Aosta" Inf. Div. n. 2282/op of 24 July 1943.

(27) A.U.S.E., folder 2228: phonogram of the XII Corps Command no. 10018/op in July 1943.

Reitano desertions were high ⁽²⁸⁾. On July 25, however, the "Assietta" received in reinforcement the 3rd Co. of the "N" Battalion of the "San Marco" regiment and the following day passed the orders of Gen. Schreiber, who replaced Gen. Scotti ⁽²⁹⁾.

Just after the proceeds of such news on poor moral steadfastness of the employee units, Gen. Zingales made the decision to issue on the night of 24 July a stark reminder to the commands of unity, urging them to "act with relentless energy to nip that definitely sad phenomenon that dishonors seriously and incalculable Italian soldier" and that cast on it "a profound discrediting light especially against the Allied Armed Forces " ⁽³⁰⁾.

In the Anglo-American camp July 25 marked the distribution of new targets by Gen. Alexander. According to them the US II Corps would continue to advance on the Tyrrhenian front with the 45th Inf. Div. and, more inside, with the 1st Inf. Div. directed on Nicosia, while behind them would have respectively proceeded the 3rd Inf. Div. and the 9th Inf. Div. ready to climb over and to alternate with the front-line troops. The Moroccan 4th Tabor broke away then from the U.S.A. 3rd Inf. div. and it passed from that day in the employ of the American 1st Inf. Div. and precisely the 18th Regimental Tactical Group. For its part the British XXX Corps would take the fresh 78th Inf. Div., the "Malta" brigade, the Scottish 51st Inf. Div. and the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. southwest of Etna against the Agira -Catenanuova line, while the English XIII Army Corps was aimed at Catania and along the Ionian coast with – the 5th and the 50th Inf. Div. ⁽³¹⁾.

On July 26 arrived in Sicily the news of the fall of Mussolini, the establishment of the new Badoglio government and the notorious insurance "the war continues," meaning Italy

(28) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps, attached 251: phonogram Command of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. n. 2510/op July 24, 1943

(29) *Ibid*, attachments 272, 275 and 292.

(30) *Ibid*, Annex 258: phonogram the XII Corps Command n. 1/9986/op of 21:00 on 24 July 1943. Also defected in areas distant from the fronts were reported on July 25 as part of the 577th Bn. of the 6th CC.NN. Legion of Messina. See. folder 2228, July 25.

(31) G.W. NICHOLSON: *The Canadians in Italy*, Ottawa, 1957, p. 139

"Keep its word, jealous guardian of its traditions" ⁽³²⁾.

Two days before his deposition, that is, July 23, Mussolini had written a letter to Guzzoni, with which he tried to soothe the worries of the Commander of the Armed Forces Sicily for some malicious appreciation about him published July 15 in the newspaper "Fascist Regime" signed by Farinacci. In this letter seems a curious misunderstanding where Mussolini encouraged Guzzoni "to make life difficult for the invaders, now that mountain locations such as Madonie offer best conditions for a resistance to the bitter end" ⁽³³⁾. Mussolini did not remember that the Madonie had been abandoned by the Italian troops since July 21 (by order of Guzzoni on 19:00 on the 20th and order of XII Corps Command of 16:00 of the 21st), or had no one yet informed him?

3. LAND OPERATIONS FROM 27 TO 31 JULY

In the night between 26 and July 27 Gen. Guzzoni, reversing the possible consequences of the change of government in Rome, he recalled to Gen. Zingales that if the Germans also had withdraw, the XII Corps had to "*defend to the bitter end*" (emphasis in original) the S. Stefano di Camastra -Nicosia line ⁽³⁴⁾.

For their part, the Germans were very concerned about a possible exit of Italy from the conflict, which would entangle all their troops in Sicily and in this regard Gen. Hube asked Guzzoni on 28 July an opinion on the phrase of Badoglio "the war continues." Subsequent fidelity insurance made by the Commander of the Armed Forces Sicily could not however be enough to reassure the Germans about the real

(32) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 311 and directory 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 11.

(33) A.U.S.E., folder 2124: Correspondence Mussolini and Hitler, "Mussolini Guzzoni letter of 23 July 1943.

(34) A.U.S.E., 2011 folder, attachment 307: radio message of the Armed Forces Command of Sicily n. 16890/op of 23:00 of 26 July 1943, received by the Command of the XII Corps at 06:00 hours of 27 July.

intentions that were harboring in Rome, so that the German Command began to think seriously about his disengagement from Sicily ⁽³⁵⁾.

On the northern front on July 27 marked the culmination of an offensive of the American 1st Inf. Div. against the German battle group "Fullriede" towards Nicosia ⁽³⁶⁾. This forced Gen. Hube and the Command of the Armed Forces Sicily to order certainly the abandonment of this location and retreat of the German troops and the "Aosta" on the line Capizzi - Cerami - Rocca Penna, while calling on the last Italian division to "ensure absolutely" the possession of the Colle del Contrasto, in order to protect the left flank of the "Assietta" and the Germanic "Kuhn" ⁽³⁷⁾.

To cover in turn the withdrawal of the bulk of the "Aosta" sacrificed themselves in Serra del Bosco, Serra Canale, Cozzo della Croce and Poggio Baciduana the 1st, 7th and 11th Co. of the 6th Inf. Regt., the sappers Co. of the same regiment and 2nd Co. of the CLXVIII CC.NN. Battalion. ⁽³⁸⁾.

Also along the Tyrrhenian coast the advanced German front retreated on July 28 to coincide with the cornerstone of the "Assietta" at S. Stefano di Camastra, after hammering under artillery fire the "Ulich" group had left in the hands of the USA 180th Regimental Combat Team the positions of Castel di Tusa and Pettineo ⁽³⁹⁾. The price paid by the Americans in this circumstance, however, was so high that the USA 45th Inf. Div. baptized the ridge of Tusa "the bloody crest." On this position finally it broke loose on the 30th a tenacious counteroffensive of the "Ulich" group which failed only after the intervention of three US artillery groups ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Another push unleashed a bit more to the interior the work of

(35) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 15-16.

(36) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit, p. 314.

(37) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachments 321 and 330 and "Report on the feats of arms of the XII Corps held from July 10 to August 2, 1943", p. 15. See also folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. from July 10 to August 4, 1943," pp. 6-7.

(38) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. from July 9 to August 13, 1943", p. 7

(39) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", p. 7.

(40) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit, pp. 321-322.

the rightwing of the usual American 45th Inf. Div. had pushed meanwhile July 28 the German units that were still near Castel di Lucia up to Misrretta and had determined the new alignment of the northwestern front between S. Stefano di Camastra, the same Mistretta, Colle del Contrasto and Rocca Penna. Further south, lost the commanding heights of Nissoria, the front is enclosed between Gagliano Castelferrato, Agita and Catenanuova by linking it to the stations of Sferro and Gerbini with the southeastern sector along the railway to Catania.

Possession of the Colle del Contrasto, recommended by Gen. Guzzoni the "Aosta" Inf. Div. as necessary cover the left side of the "Assietta" and the Germanic "Kuhn", as well as control the highway between Nicosia and St. Stephen of Carnastra, was not, however, guaranteed for a mistake by the I/5th Inf. "Aosta." In addition, the bulk of the relevant Division in retreat crossed the withdraw line Capizzi - Cerami - Rocca Penna, which had been established on the 27th, as we said, by Guzzoni ⁽⁴¹⁾.

The latter therefore was forced to reiterate on July 28 "that the *Aosta* was to be used on the front line together with the German troops" ⁽⁴²⁾. As we shall see, however, the next day it was necessary to rethink another retreat by the Armed Forces Command of Sicily and even more eastward.

For its part, the "Assietta" tried to remedy the failure to defend the Colle del Contrasto by dispatching a Co. of the I/29th Inf., motorized and the 52nd motorcyclists Co., but the Germans had broken from the north side of the roadway to Mistretta and the relief could no longer be achieved ⁽⁴³⁾. Consequently, the USA 1st Inf. Div. swept on 29 July from the evacuated Nicosia, past the helpless Colle del Contrasto, placed their artillery on the northern Monte Castelli, where he began to hammer Mistretta, and finally at 5

(41) A.U.S.E. ., folder 2011, attachment 348: radio message of "Aosta" Inf. Div. Command n. 2370 of 13:10 hours of July 28, 1943.

(42) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 16. See. Also L. RING: *La battaglia di Troina*, Messina 1971, p. 19. Since then the "Aosta" virtually ceased to build a body and inserted its residues units fractionally in the German deployment, See. A.U.S.E. folder 2011, phonogram "Aosta" Inf. Div. Command 2370/op of 28 July 1943.

(43) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B "Report on the operations of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. from July 9 to August 13, 1943". P. 14.

kilometers from the latter town threatened to bypass the left wing of the German "Ulich" regiment ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Given the above, at 16:00 on July 29 Gen. Guzzoni, urged by von Senger, authorized by telephone Gen. Zingales (order later confirmed at 17.:0 with radio message 16976/op) to withdraw all Italian forces on the front of S. Fratello - Troina. In particular the remains of "Assietta" were deployed north to set-up the defense of the junction S. Fratello - Monte Pelato ⁽⁴⁵⁾. The same Gen. Zingales, transferring his command from Mirto to Tortorici, would take the direction of this new baseline "as long as the German troops had not withdrawn on top of it" ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

They not however managed to break away, because of the traffic disruptions caused by enemy artillery, and came thus lost the 2nd bty. of the I/22nd Art. "Aosta", the 12th bty. IV/22nd Art, "Aosta" and the 301st bty. of the LXXV group ⁽⁴⁷⁾,

After this retreat of the remains of the two Italian Inf. Divs, and later to afore American pressure on Misuetta, then occupied on July 31 along with Cerami and Capizzi, deployment assumed at the front line in the northern sector by the "Ulich" group and the Fullriede-Neapel group was running to make ends meet between S. Stefano di Camastra, Trefinaidi Monte, Monte Pomiere, Capizzi area and Rocca Penna.

The Italian contribution, considered the splitting up and absorption of the remaining infantry of "Aosta" and "Assietta" in the German positions, was provided mainly by artillery, distributed in the following two blocks:

North block (sector of the "Assietta" under the command of Leut.

(44) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", page 142 and folder IT 1125.

(45) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 17.; folder 1175 bis. phonograms "Assietta" Inf. Div. Command n. 2593/op and 2606/op of 29 July 1943. folder 2228, telegram Command of the Armed Forces Sicily n. 16976/op of 17:30 hours of July 29, 1943; folder 2011: " Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", p. 144 and attachments 363 and 378. The "Assietta" had already asked and did not get on the morning of July 29, permission to withdraw. See *Ibid*, attachments 359 and 360.

(46) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 28 and cited telegram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16976/op of 17:30 on 29 July.

(47) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B "Report on the operations of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. from July 9 to August 13, 1943". P. 16,

Col. Arpaia) with the III/25th of 75/27 with two bty., The new group IV of 105/28 with three bty., the CLVII group of 149/19 with two bty., The CXXI Group of 149/13 with one bty. and one bty. of three 149/19 pieces of the CLI group;

Southern block (sector of the "Aosta" under the command of Leut. Col. Cenedese) with the II/22nd of 75/27, the 11th bty. of the IV/27th of 75/13 and a bty. of 105/28 from the XLVIII group ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Meanwhile in the south-central sector the British XXX Corps had pushed the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. and the 231st Brigade "Malta" against Agira respectively from the west and south, eventually occupying it on the evening of July 28, after eighty guns had poured on the positions of the German "Ens" group 139 rounds each ⁽⁴⁹⁾. In the area of the said German Battle Group was incorporated, as you know, the II/34th Inf. "Livorno" of Maj. Coco, who lost on the occasion 7 officers and 190 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men, including Sgt. Cattaneo, gold medal in the memory, but who managed to break away at night and to take shelter north of Regalbuto ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

The next day also fell the cornerstones of Pizzo Stupari and Pizzo Tibro, where the 5th Co. and 6th Co. Of the II/34 Inf. lost 3 officers and 215 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men killed, prisoners and missing, but they earned the praise of the Germans ⁽⁵¹⁾.

Following the good test provided between Agira and Regalbuto by infantrymen of the II/34th "Livorno", Leut. Col. Ens, commander of the eponymous German battle group consisting of the 104th Inf. Regiment of the "Sizilien" Div., asked them not to interrupt the collaboration until then lent effectively by Coco Group, but was now reduced to no more than 300 actual. Maj. Coco joined in part to the request, leaving the Germans only his

(48) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 372. The "Aosta" had also have two bty. of the XXI group 105/28, but with little ammunition. The "Assietta" had instead available, also with little ammunition the 1st bty. I/22nd Art. 75/27 and a bty. of 75/06.

(49) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 280. The 231st Brigade "Malta" had about 300 dead and wounded, while the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. lamented in the same condition 438, what did the battle of Agria the bloodiest for the British XXX Corps. See. HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit. p. 155.

(50) A.U.S.E., folder 1506: "Report on the operations carried out by the battle group of Major Coco from 10 to 31 July 1943". P. 5.

(51) *Ibid*, p. 6.

units still fairly efficient, that is, the 6th Co., to whom he placed his remains (a hundred men) in the second row at the turn of the highway for Traina, Buscemi-Revisotto. Instead the other 210 men of the II/34th Inf., No more forming organic units, were finally withdrawn to the rear, according to the insistent demands of Guzzoni, and arrived at St. Lucia del Mela on the night of August ⁽⁵²⁾.

Far ahead of the new positions of the 6th Co., the Coco group, on the front that ran from Catenanuova along the river of the Dittaino, the most important event in the last few days of July was the conquest by the Canadian 3rd Brigade, the 30th of the month, the same Catenanuova, defended by the German I/3rd paratroopers ⁽⁵³⁾. The rest were registered aerial bombardment and naval gunfire along the Ionian coast, as always undisturbed. Among other things on the night of 29 and July 30 was Acireale targeted from the sea, where - as Gen. Guzzoni signaled - there was "complete absenteeism of the civil authorities of the city and the absolute lack of civilian medical staff to attend to the many wounded." The relief work was therefore carried out by only the military doctors of the 102nd Coastal Battalion and the II Assault Battalion ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Once occupied Catenanuova the fight in this southwestern sector moved to the new line Gagliano Castelferrato - Regalbuto - Centuripe, defended by the "Ens" group, against which Gen. Montgomery did intervene the same July 30 with the fresh 78th Inf. Div. of Gen. Eveleigh, who was accompanied to the Canadian 1st and 2nd Brigade and the 231st Brigade "Malta" ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

In the far Ionian sector, however, "H. Goering" Div., divided into three well-known battle groups, along with the 'Schmalz' group

(52) A.U.S.E., folder 1506, "Report on the operations carried out by the battle group of Major Coco 10 to 31 July 1943", pp. 6-7. In this respect Gen. Guzzoni had directed to Gen. von Senger a final appeal at 20:00 hours of July 29, with whom he also called for the release of the remains of the I/76th Inf. "Napoli" from the positions of the "H. Goering" Div. See. A.U.S.E., folder 2228, telegram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 16982/op of 29 July 1943.

(53) A.U.S.E., Folder 2228: memo from the German connection Delegation (Lt. Col. Wolf) of 10:30 am on 30 July 1943.

(54) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: "Historical Military Diary of the 6th Army." phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 17114/op of 18:00 on August 2, 1943 addressed to the Deputy Civil Commissioner.

(55) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit. p. 151

the paratroopers came under increased pressure of the Scottish 51st Inf. Div. with the objective of the Gerbini airport, the first stage of the new attack entrusted to two British Army Corps starting from 1 August.

4. GERMANS TAKE THE CONTROL OF THE ENTIRE GROUND FRONT. EVOLUTION OF LIABILITY ON THE SEA FRONT

As we have already seen at midnight on July 18 Gen. Hube had been authorized to remove the XVI Corps of Gen. Rossi the direct command of all German troops in Sicily, including the remains of the "Livorno" and "Napoli" Div. inserted in the German lines. Then on July 22 Gen. von Senger had requested but not obtained from Guzzoni, supported by Rome, which Hube took over the command of the whole German-Italian front, in view of the now prevailing Germanic weight in the defense of the north-eastern tip of Sicily. Indeed, to mitigate at least on paper the obvious numerical inferiority of Italian troops in the front line, as well as to respect the well-known assignments addressed by Gen. Ambrosio to Gen. Keitel in the conference of Feltre, Superesercito had promised on the 23rd sending to the island of the "Alps Graie" Alpine Div., which never came ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

The fulfillment of the German ambition for unrestricted command operations in Sicily, however, was only delayed by a few days.

On July 25, the day of the fall of Mussolini, the same Gen. Hube returned to the subject, repeatedly asked Guzzoni the command of the entire front of the island, only excluding the residue coastal stretch ⁽⁵⁷⁾. In this regard, the Command of the Armed Forces Sicily consulted the G.S.R.E., which in turn on July 26 asked the Comando Supremo its opinion ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

Following the abovementioned call, the G.S.R.E. gave the Comando Supremo on July 29 supplementary

(56) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 6.

(57) *Ibid*, p. 9.

(58) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/A, "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command," the telex S.M.R.E. n. 1294/op of 26 July 1943 addressed to the Comando Supremo.

information on the Sicilian situation with the following telex ⁽⁵⁹⁾:

"Reference my telex 1294/op of 26 current communicate: General Guzzoni official confirmation that General Hube had not yet received a notification of those original orders & insists, therefore, to maintain control of the entire front, except the coastal stretches. In this regard Guzzoni General informs that currently the front in question, having entered in right wing also Command Germanic 29th Div., the troops are nearly all German & that even the meager forces of the "Assietta" and "Aosta" Div. are interspersed with Germanic units & directly reinforced with German antitank & artillery units. "

It is at this point interesting to note that in the margins of said notice Gen. Ambrosio foot noted sharply in pencil: "Obviously he wants to give it to him, but then why does not he say?" Then, however, the Comando Supremo did not think to take any responsibility, and the same evening thus he replied to the Superesercito ⁽⁶⁰⁾:

"Answering telex 1294 & 1338 of 26th & 29th of the current. This General Staff is free to allocate as it sees the front of the 6th Army between Italians Germans & corps. This High Command expressed the opinion that it would be highly desirable for obvious reasons on the front were also represented the Italian commands. However it realizes that if you do not send complements the Italian G.U. will gradually run out. This General Staff then take into consideration the urgent need to reinforce the Italian G.U. with complements even to give the crisp feeling that do not reach the island only German elements as now largely takes place as is the Comando Supremo.

As for the breakdown of the front this General Staff will regulate as it sees fit."

Receiving such directives, Superesercito adopted two decisions. At 21:15 of July 30 it assumed responsibility to authorize Gen. Guzzoni to yield to German insistence and "to entrust the command of the entire ground front

(59) *Ibid*, telex of S.M.R.E. n. 1294/op of 15:30 hours of July 29, 1943 addressed to the Comando Supremo.

(60) *Ibid*, telex of the Comando Supremo No. 15359 of 19:30 hours of July 29, 1943

To Gen. Hube" ⁽⁶¹⁾. Then on July 31 the same Superesercito promised to send to Sicily a long list of reinforcements, none of which ever reached the island ⁽⁶²⁾.

The Commander of the Armed Forces of Sicily, is now considered merely Commander of the Italian 6th Army, however, not reported right away to the Germans Rome's approval to leave the management of their operations on the island, wanting to explain the issue to his immediate colleagues, with whom a meeting had been convened for the last day of the month ⁽⁶³⁾.

The aforementioned interview actually took place on July 31 and saw gathered Gen. Guzzoni, Zingales, Jacoe and Faldella, Adm. Barone and the Col. Grosso and Scarpa ⁽⁶⁴⁾. Guzzoni put those present aware of the transfer of command to Gen. Hube and instructed Gen. Zingales to examine how the remains of the divisions "Aosta" and "Assietta" could be entrusted to the Germans.

Following this important change in the direction of operations in Sicily, the command of the XII Corps would remain also without duties and therefore would be transferred to the mainland. They also left Sicily some units defined as "over abundant", including the 10th 90/53 Semoventi by grouping, specialized elements of former mobile grouping "West", the stragglers gathered in the deposits and the remains of the antitank units of the "Livorno" ⁽⁶⁵⁾. The XIX Coastal Brigade instead, being at the start under Command of XII Army Corps, would return to the employ of the XVI Army Corps, which was left the entire front of the sea ⁽⁶⁶⁾.

At 14:00 on 31 July Guzzoni finally communicated to Gen. Hube to have received the authorization of G.S.R.E. to leave the Germans the direction of the entire front, as well as his decision to

(61) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943, p. 19.

(62) *Ibid*, p. 21.

(63) *Ibid*, p. 19 bis.

(64) A.U.S.E., folder 2228: "Interview of 31 July 1943 to the Command of the 6th Army.

(65) The final transfer decision into Calabria of these units was taken by Guzzoni with phonogram n. 17057/op of August 1943. See. A.U.S.E., folder. 2011, annex 408.

(66) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", phonogram of the Command of the 6th Army n. 17073/op of 1 August 1943.

withdraw to the continent the Command of the XII Corps.⁽⁶⁷⁾ Gen. Hube accepted the coveted assignment, which was to become officially effective starting from 12:00 on August 2, almost three days after the authorization from Rome⁽⁶⁸⁾.

The Germans had not yet officially assumed the operational command in Sicily that on 1 August they began to convey to Guzzoni a long list of acrimonious complaints. That day, in fact the Gen.Hube addressed to the Command of the 6th Army the following dispatch, which is reproduced for historical honesty⁽⁶⁹⁾.

"Below are hereby informed, literally, a communication of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division:

As part of the factors that constitute the superiority of the enemy, importance should not be underestimated the behavior of Italians, both of Italian soldiers, and of the Sicilian population.

On the evening of July 29, for example, the battalion of the "Aosta" division used employed to the left wing of Fullriede regiment went en masse to the enemy. When the Colonel did open fire on those who passed to the enemy, he was able to stop a second lieutenant and a few men. The lieutenant said his battalion commander had given the order to desert.

In numerous other cases Italian units in the division sector have withdrawn without prior warning, in which case they with their vehicles hinder the traffic on the roads of the railroads and sometimes blocked.

The Sicilian population openly sympathizes with the enemy. It puts voluntarily available as a practical guide of places. In the mountains the population naturally knows every path. For those paths later in the hours of the night the enemy columns transported by pack animals are guided up to the shoulders of our positions. When the enemy enters the town, the population gives to open expressions of sympathy. "

A condemnation of the excited behavior of the Sicilian population against the enemy came soon after by the new commander of the "Assietta" Gen. Schreiber, who for the occasion called attention of the dependent commands also on

(67) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 20 and F.M. SENGGER und ETIERLIN: *Combattere senza paura e senza speranza*, op. cit., p. 245

(68) A.U.S.E., folder: 2228: "Historical Military Diary of the 6th Army," attached 8617/16 phonogram Command 6th Army n. 17077/op of 1 August 1943.

(69) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: "Historical Military Diary of the 6th Army," a dispatch from the German XIV Armored Corps Command n. Ia / Ic / 481/43 g.Kdos, of 1 August 1943.

the «disgrace » represented indiscipline and disorder found in many military and groups of misfits⁽⁷⁰⁾.

But that atmosphere of suspicion was not truly felt only in place and particularly by the Germans. In fact, on July 30 the same S.M.R.E. had even challenged the nervous resistance of Adm. Barone, calling it "currently depressed and discouraged" and ready to justify in public conversations the "behavior of individuals who have left the ferries and looting"⁽⁷¹⁾. The S.M.R.E. he then asked Guzzoni to investigate whether the Naval Commander of Sicily had ceased to "react strongly" and, if so, to replace him certainly, as the Chief of Staff of the Royal Navy, interviewed in this regard, he had no objection⁽⁷²⁾.

The following day, however Guzzoni openly defended against the S.M.R.E. Adm. Barone, denying the opportunity for replacing and setting the disheartened "as the majority of those who have information to assess the situation"⁽⁷³⁾.

It is nevertheless necessary to recapitulate at this point the operational responsibility changes between commands of the Army and the Royal Navy took place in Sicily since the Allied invasion.

As you recall, on July 13, shortly after the controversial episode of the Naval base of Augusta-Siracusa, the Comando Supremo expressed to Superesercito with dispatch 14819/op the desire to enter the naval base of Messina- Reggio Calabria into the coastal organization of the Army. On July 14 Supermarina then called, with telegram 35085, the split between the Autonomous Naval Command of Sicily and Messina Naval Command, on which would depend operationally from the Local Naval Base command.

On July 18, the Comando Supremo, with phonogram 14991/op, places the Command Naval Base of Messina-Reggio and all the coastal defense of the island directly to the XVI Corps, with effect from 24:00 hours on the 19th. To Adm. Barone was

(70) A.U.S.E., folder 1175 bis, dispatches of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. Command n. 2650/op and n. 2662/op of 1st and 2 August 1943.

(71) A.U.S.E., folder 2228, annexed 930/33: marconigram the S.M.R.E. n. 1/17039/P of 30 July 1943 addressed to the Armed Forces Command of Sicily.

(72) *Ibid.*

(73) A.U.S.E., folder: 2228: phonogram of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 17034/op of 31 July 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

left "the technical part of seamanship" and of course the Naval Command of Sicily.

Finally, on July 22 the Supreme Command, with phonogram 15111/op, ordered the complete separation of the naval base commands of Messina -Reggio Calabria from the Naval Command of Sicily and its passage to the orders of a General of the Army in the employ of the XVI Army Corps, with an Rear Admiral subordinate to the affairs of the local Naval command. In fact, on July 27 the Base Command was taken up by Gen. Bozzoni, while at the same time the German Col. Baade officially assumed the direction of the artillery in defense of the Straits. Adm. Baron, however, received from the Comando Supremo, with dispatch 1861/UT on July 22, the responsibilities of the traffic in the Straits as well as the movements in ports and beaches, as well as maintaining the Naval Command of Sicily ⁽⁷⁴⁾.

5. THE DEFENSIVE FRONT ON THE FIRST OF AUGUST AND THE BEGINNING OF THE ITALIAN EVACUATION

In compliance with the orders issued by Gen. Guzzoni with dispatch 16976/op, in the afternoon of July 29, the remains of the two Inf. Div. "Aosta" and "Assietta" were withdrawn, as is known, on the line S. Fratello -Mount Pelato-Troina, leaving the Germans (29th Div. on the coastal sector and the "Sizilien" Div. more to the interior) the defense of the advanced front passing through St. Stefano di Camastra, Monte, Trefinaidi, Monte Pomiere, the Capizzi area, Gagliano Castelferrato, Regalbuto, Centuripe, the course of the Simeto.

Of the two reduced Italian Inf. Div. the "Assietta" occupied on August 1st the northernmost area of the sector of competence, between St.

(74) For all the foregoing see. A.U.S.E., folder 1502 attachments 657 and 727; Folder 1503 attachments 997, 1242 and 1245; folder. 1506 Attachment 27, folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 12; folder 2228 dispatch n. 16607/op of 18 July 1943 of the Armed Forces Command Sicily and attachments 719/13 and 726/11. To the tasks of Col. Baade see folder 2266: "Considerations of the 1943-1944 Italian campaign of Colonel Bogislav von Bonin, Chief of G.M. of the German XIV Corps in Sicily." pp 16-17

Fratello and Monte Pelato and, in agreement with the command of the German 29th Div., it deployed its' units as follows ⁽⁷⁵⁾.

- I/29th Inf. (500 surviving men) between Pizzo and Pizzo Renatura Costanzo;
- II/29th Inf. (450 surviving men) between 15:27 kilometers of the highway for St. Fratello;
- 30th Inf. Regt. consisting only of the II Battalion with 600 surviving men, half-Co. antitank guns and the Assault Co., in the area of Pizzo degli Angeli, reinforced by XXX "Palermo" Calvary group of only 60 men on foot ⁽⁷⁶⁾;
- a battalion formation located in the Sprazzi area and created under the command of Maj. Bers. Bruni (not to be confused with the Leut. Col. Bruni of the "Livorno") with the remains of the 50th motorcyclists Co., a Bersaglieri Co. of the 10th Regt., a Co. of Camicie Nere of the CLXVIII Battalion., a antitank Co. and 136 men already members of the Mobile Grouping "South" ⁽⁷⁷⁾.

The artillery then available to the "Assietta" Subdivide, if roughly into the two groups examined the north and the south in support of the German troops, were the following.

- Ist bty. I/22nd of the "Aosta" of 75/27 south of St. Fratello;
- IInd bty. IV/22nd "Aosta" of 75/13 south of St St. Fratello;
- III/25th "Assietta" 75/27 with two bty. at Pizzo degli Angeli, with a combined five pieces from 75/34 P. B. antitank transferred from coastal defense; ,
- CLVII. group 149/19 with two bty. West of Acquedolci;
- CXXI Group 149/13 with one bty. Southwest of Acquedolci;
- XLVIII Group 105/28 with one bty. at Pizzo degli Angeli;
- LV Group 105/28 of Lt. Col. Arpaia arrived July 30 with three bty. Southwest of Acquedolci;
- four loose pieces of 75/06 ceded by the coastal defense, with

(75) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. from July 9 to August 13, 1943"- p, 16 - 17: Folder 1175bis:" Survey carried out by Mr. Gen. Commander the day 1 August 1943 on the new positions of the "Assietta" Inf. Div.; Folder 2228 and folder 2011 attachment 387: sheet of Command XII Corp n. 1/10124/op of 31 July 1943 on " efficiency of the divisions 'Aosta' and 'Assietta' as of July 31"; folder 2229 annexed 731/22 "Situation on day 1 August 1943 of the divisions "Aosta" and "Assietta".

(76) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: Annex 396: phonogram of the XII Corps Command no. 1/10133/op of 31 July 1943.

(77) *Ibid*, Annex 407: phono 1/10151/op of 1 August the XII Corp Command.

which it was reconstituted a new bty. of the I/22nd Art. South of St. Fratello;

-a bty. of 149/19 with three pieces recovered from the coastal defense and deployed south of Acquadolci;

-a-aircraft group with six pieces of 75 CK, at the cemetery of St. Fratello ⁽⁷⁸⁾.

On August 3, Gen. Schreiber made known the number of losses suffered by the "Assietta" up to that point and consisting of 16 dead, 20 wounded and well missing or dissipated 9,110 ⁽⁷⁹⁾. Among the latter were numbered, in addition to belonging to the Services, 2,085 enlisted men of troops, 117 non-commissioned officers and 40 officers of the 29th Inf. Regiment, 2,608 enlisted men, 114 non-commissioned officers and 42 officers of the 30th Inf. Regiment, 1,292 enlisted men, 66 non-commissioned officers and 67 officers of the 25th Art. Regiment and 1,221 enlisted men, 66 non-commissioned officers and 50 officers of the 17th Camicie Nere legion ⁽⁸⁰⁾.

Even the "Aosta" Inf. Div., moved back on 1 August into the Traina area and mixed with Germanic units of the rearguard, had continued to suffer in those days the painful phenomenon of defections, as communicated by his Command on July 30, and as was confirmed the following day by the XII Corps command of Army Gen. Guzzoni ⁽⁸¹⁾. In particular they were killed 2 officers and 155 NCOs and enlisted men and wounded 14 officers and 682 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men, while the number of absentees was 51 officers and 2,635 noncommissioned officers and enlisted men ⁽⁸²⁾.

The "Aosta" therefore was reduced to the following levels ⁽⁸³⁾:

-5th Inf. Regt. with the I Battalion had (400 men), the III Battalion (500 men), the Assault Co., sappers Co., antitank guns Co.;

-6th Inf. Regt. with the I Battalion (700 men) and the III Battalion (500 men).

(78) *Ibid*, Annex 413: "Situation of the divisional artillery, of the Army Corps and of the reinforcements on the morning of 1 August 1943.

(79) A.U.S.E., 1175 folder a "Loss reporting", Phonogram of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. Command n. 2667/op of 3 August 1943.

(80) A.U.S.E., folder 1175 bis, annexed to the abovementioned sheet 2667/op of 3 August.

(81) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 386: phonogram "Assietta" Inf. Div. Command n. 2403/op of 30 July 1943 and Annex 387: phonogram XII Corps Command No. 1/10124/op of 31 July 1943.

(82) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations of the "Aosta" Inf. Div.; in Sicily since the day July 10 to August 4, 1943,"p. 9.

(83) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, attachment 731/22 "Situation on 1 August 1943 of the "Aosta" and "Assietta" Divisions.

This regiment, as it is known, had lost in the fighting rearguard of 27 July the 1st, 7th and 11th Co., In addition to the Sappers Co.;

- DCCCLVII antitank Battalion, left with only the third company;
- the mixed Engineer unit;
- II/22nd Art. of 75/27 with two bty.;
- CLI Art. Group of 149/19 with seven pieces, including four recovered;
- XXI Art. Group of 105/28 with two bty.;
- 328th flak Bty. of 20 mm. nine weapons⁽⁸⁴⁾.

The deployment of the remains of the Italian two Inf. Div. had just been completed on the proposed positions when on August 2, at the same time when the Germans officially took control of the entire land front, Gen. Guzzoni arranged for twenty-four hours following the removal from Sicily, as well as the XII Corps Command, also the Command of the "Aosta" Div. and the Command of the "Assietta" divisional infantry. Here is the important radio message n. 17118/op with which it was said to be the beginning of the Italian evacuation of the island⁽⁸⁵⁾.

"Follow& confirms orders given this morning to the Chief of the G.S. of this Corp., is provided as follows:

- 1) This Command withdraws into Calabria starting with current headquarters afternoon 3rd current. It will remain in place a core of Command, composed of Deputy Chief of the G.S. with Services Office & an official of the Operations Office. His task: to provide to the materials & moral needs of the troops of the Corp. Aforesaid unit will depend on this command.
- 2) The "Aosta" Division Command withdraws also to Calabria. Command of the "Aosta" troops will be assumed by General Marchesi, commander divisional infantry.
- 3) The "Assietta" Division Command remains in place with his commander Gen. Schreiber. Withdraws to Calabria the "Assietti" divisional infantry command."

We must point out that the Germans were not informed of this order, which was not for the moment forwarded to Gen. von Senger.

(84). A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachment 413: "Situation of the divisional artillery, of the Army Corps and reinforcements on the morning of 1 August 1943.

(85) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", Annex 433; radio message of the Armed Forces Command Sicily n. 17118/op of 11:45 hours of August 2, 1943 addressed to the XII Corps.

With next marconigram 17152/op of 3 August, directed this time also to the Germans and that we believe we should be included in the appendix (appendix n. 13), Gen. Guzzoni pointed to the nucleus of the XII Corps Command that since then would have remained in the line in total between the Italian contingents of the "Assietta" Inf. Div command, only the 29th Inf. Regiment with two battalions and artillery already operating with the German 29th and 15th Div., as well as with the "H. Goering". The remaining units of the "Assietta" and "Aosta" - including the remains of the 5th, 6th and 30th Inf. Regt. - instead they had to withdraw from the newly assumed positions and move to be available to the XVI Corps to be used in coastal defense ⁽⁸⁶⁾.

The same August 3 began the movements of the commands to be evacuated, they were on their way to the Straits for the transfer into Calabria ⁽⁸⁷⁾. However, the I/5th Inf. "Aosta" of Leut. Col. Gianquinto was held in the line, in spite of Guzzoni orders by the command of the German 15th "Sizilien" Div.. It remained until the afternoon of the 6th on its positions at Serra Castagna northwest of Troina, attacked by the enemy, and only barely managed to escape that day encirclement, retreating to Pizzo Maulazzo with a residual force of only 170 men ⁽⁸⁸⁾.

They proved similarly until the early hours of August 6, employed by the German battle group "Ens" of the I and III group of the 28th Art. Regt. "Livorno", which were let loose on that date in the Cesarò area and reached the following day the "Livorno" division command at St. Lucia del Mela ⁽⁸⁹⁾.

The beginning of the "flow and clearing to the mainland of units of the 6th Army" on August 3, the day is also confirmed by the report prepared 12th of the month by the command of a special "stating unit" set up in Messina since August by the orders of Col. Salamo ⁽⁹⁰⁾.

(86) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: marconigram of the 6th Army Command n. 17152/op of 3 August 1943, attached as an appendix.

(87) A.U.S.E., folder 2011: "Military Historical Journal of the XII Corps", day 3 August 1943; folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. in Sicily since the day July 10 to August 4, 1943," p. 8

(88) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the activities of the units of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. from 4 to 11 August 1943", pp. 6-7.

(89) A.U.S.E., folder 1506, phonogram of the "Livorno" Inf. Div. Command n.2/2683 of 7 August 1943.

(90) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: "Historical Military Diary of the 6th Army", Report on the starting of the units to the Calabria region on August 12, 1943"

6 GROUND OPERATIONS 1 TO 5 AUGUST AND THE FALL OF CATANIA (See Map n. 27)

On 1 August, given that according to Gen. Alexander should have marked no later than the beginning of the decisive offensive of the 7th and the 8th Armies, he recorded three targets in effect for the Allied troops ⁽⁹¹⁾. They were the conquest of S. Stefano di Camastra on the Tyrrhenian highway 113, evacuated by the last German rearguard, the occupation of Gagliano Castelferrato, which followed by one day of Capizzi and of Cerami in the direction to Troina, and the entry of the Scottish 51st Inf. Div. into the airport of Gerbini, after a local counterattack of German tanks had been frustrated by British artillery.

In this last sector operate, intermixed with the units of the "H. Goering", the remains of I/76th Inf. "Napoli" of Leut. Col. Parabbi, who suffered the loss of the 2nd company, overwhelmed by the Scottish tanks into the valley of Sferro. The battalion survivors were then authorized by the German Command to break away from the enemy and achieve Paterno and then Trecastagni, from where they departed on the evening of August 2 to join the regimental Command at Mazzarà St. Andrea. So it was that the end as well be used on the front lines of the I/76th Inf. "Napoli" ⁽⁹²⁾.

This battalion, together with the III/54th Art., was placed on August 8, by Guzzoni with orders issued since 14:30 of 1 August, to reform the "Assietta" Inf. Div., which was meant as a mass of maneuver in the Mazzarà St. Andrea Casale -Borgata area. However these units no longer had occasion to return to the line since on 1 August all the remains of the "Assietta" still on the island were ordered to evacuate Sicily and retire to Calabria ⁽⁹³⁾.

On the day of 1 August still they occurred even episodes favorable to the defenders. First and foremost was luckily a counterattack of the German "Fullriede" Grenadiers group against

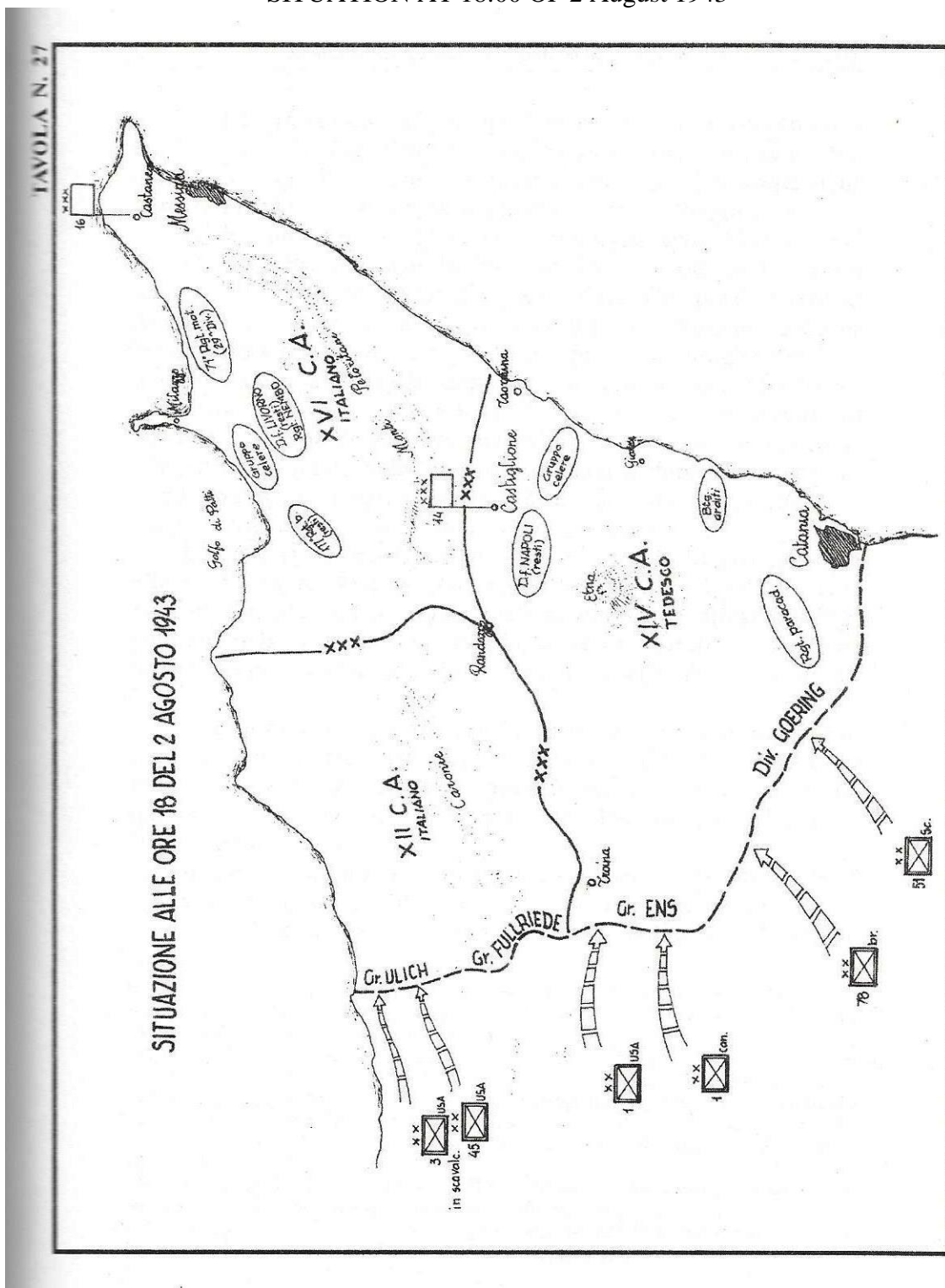
(91) E. Linklater: *The campaign in Italy*, op. cit., p. 36.

(92) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations performed by the I Bn. 76th Inf. from 17 July to 1 August 1943".

(93) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps. P. 161; 1175 bis folder; phonogram the XVI Corps Command n. 01/10433/op 8 August 1943 Folder 2124/B "Report on the operations of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. from July 9 to August 13, 1943," pp. 19-20.

Map 27

SITUATION AT 18:00 OF 2 August 1943



the American III/39th Inf. on Mount Timponivoli, 5 kilometers northwest of Troina, lost and regained twice ⁽⁹⁴⁾.

Then took place the following courageous sabotage action in the British rear at the hands of the Assault of the 10th Regiment.

In the night on 1 August the 4th Patrol of the 112th of the II/10th Assault Regiment, under the Command of the Leut. Artoni and composed of nine men, landed three assault craft in Capo Campolato (North of Augusta), through an English camp and reached at dawn

- The district of Celona, finding hospitality at the family of Leut. Artoni. Hence the patrols, after gathering valuable information, drove off into the night between 1 and 2 August with the intention of sabotaging a nearby store of artillery ammunition. The company succeeded and the patrol returned to lines at Catania after an eventful and exhausting return journey, completed part by a makeshift boat and partly by swimming ⁽⁹⁵⁾.

Overnight on August 2, meanwhile, the Canadian 1st Brigade and the 231st Brigade "Malta", from Agira on the highway 121, had attacked Regalbuto still heavily defended by the Pioneers Battalion of the "H. Goering" and reduced it to a heap of rubble, causing the fall of the town and surrounding hills ⁽⁹⁶⁾.

The fall of Regalbuto put in serious danger of winding the front held by the other units of the "H. Goering" on the line Muglia - Rotondella train station - Motta St. Anastasia train station and therefore were retreated on the alignment Pietralunga - Parernò - Misterbianco - Catania ⁽⁹⁷⁾.

Gen. Guzzoni made known by telephone at 06:00 on August 2, of the said the German retreat to the Command of the 213th Coastal Div., which in turn was directed that evening the order to make "completely unusable

(94) A.U.S.E., folder 2011, attachments 403, 416, 429 and 436. See. Also L. ANELLO: *La battaglia di Troina*, op. cit., p. 52 et seq. U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit. p. 334-336.

(95) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, dispatch of the 10th Assault Regt. Command on "sabotage Action Report" n. 395/op of 4 August 1943. The report states that all members of the patrol returned unharmed at different times, while the communication of Guzzono to Superesercito of 3 August I speak of "two dead and several wounded" in its ranks. See. A.U.S.E., folder 2229, phonogram Command 6th Army n. 17127/op of 3 August 1943.

(96) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit. p. 161.

(97) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, "Daily Bulletin of the XIV Corps. for the day of August 1, 21:00 hours" and folder IT 1125, Night of August 2

the port of Catania" to be implemented after the possible evacuation of the city by German troops ⁽⁹⁸⁾. The 213th Coastal Div. began her part in the night on 3rd the retreat back toward the 1st line of arrest Stazzo Linera -Fieri, north of Acireale ⁽⁹⁹⁾. Their command still communicated to have evacuated from Catania 20 pieces of 20 mm, 2 of 37/54, 9 of 90/53, a bty. of 75/27, as well as 10 separate pieces of 100 and 75 mm. and having made unusable other artillery ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾.

On the northern and central front tenacious resistance between 1 and 5 August respectively offered by the German battle groups "Ulich" and "Fullriede", supported by the listed artillery of the "Assietta", in what was the beginning of the bloody battle of Troina. Here the German troops, despite the doubts raised in Berlin on the suitability to extend the Sicilian campaign after the fall of Mussolini and in view of a possible Italian about face, carried frequent counterattacks holding up to the 5th the line Caronia Marina - Monte Pomiere - Monte Acuto - Monte Salici east of Gagliano ⁽¹⁰¹⁾. This in spite of the nourished concentrations of artillery and repeated attempts to break through both to the north by the US 3rd Inf. Div., who had climbed over the 45th Inf. Div. on 1 August, and in the center by the USA 1st Inf. Div. and the 39th Regimental Tactical Group of the American 9th Inf. Div. The latter division of Gen. Eddy then entered fully into the line on Aug. 7 in place of the 1st Division ⁽¹⁰²⁾.

Further south however the "Ens" battle group and the German I/3rd Paratroopers of Capt. Liebscher had to later evacuate Regalbuto,

(98) A.U.S.E., folder 1427; "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 164 and Annex 177: phonogram Command XVI Corps. n. 01/10086/op of 23:40 hours of August 2, 1943.

(99) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: phonogram Command XVI Corps. n. 01/10142/op of 3 August 1943.

(100) A.U.S.E., folder 1427: "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 176. The "total unusable of the port of Catania", recommended by Guzzoni, however, turned out not implemented, as had happened at Augusta, Syracuse, Porto Empedocle, Trapani and Palermo.

(101) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: the phonogram of the 6th Army Command n. 17127/op : "News Summary 04:00 hours of 3 August 1943" and "Daily Bulletin of 24:00 on August 3rd."

(102) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit. pp 347-348.

then to Centuripe on August 3, under the pressure of the fresh British 78th Inf. Div. of Gen. Eveleigh⁽¹⁰³⁾.

The British breakthrough in this delicate sector found fatally both the left side of the Troina front held by the "Fullriede" group, and the right side next to the "H. Goering" in Pietralunga and Paterno. Therefore on August 5th Gen. Hube was forced to order the withdrawal of the groups "Fullriede" and "Ens" on the line joining Monte Pelato -Troina - Revisotto and the retreat of the "H. Goering," of the "Schmalz" group and the German paratroopers on the front Adrano - Belpasso -Nord of Catania⁽¹⁰⁴⁾.

On August 5, thus Misterbianco and Paterno fell into the hands of the English 5th Inf. Div., while Catania, evacuated by the "H. Goering" and the 4th Paratroopers Regiment of Leut. Col. Walther, was occupied the same afternoon by the famous British 50th Inf. Div..

Considering that even the Tyrrhenian front the German battle group "Ulich" was forced, after five days of fighting along the Caronia creek, to retreat to the Furiano creek, the evening of August 5 the entire front passing by the same Furiano to Monte Pelato and then touched Serra Castagna (where, as we know, there was still I/5th Inf. "Aosta" of Leut. Col. Gianquinto), Troina, Revisotto, Adrano, Biancavilla, Belpasso, north of Catania.

They were in conclusion English successes in the south-central sector between Regalbuto and Centuripe initially to undermine the strong defensive of the Troina front, and not vice versa, as we read elsewhere⁽¹⁰⁵⁾.

Illustrating the situation created on that fateful August 5, Gen. Guzzoni signaled the S.M.R.E., the following eight key points⁽¹⁰⁶⁾.

1. Clear English intention to penetrate along the line Adrano -Bronte - Randazzo west of Etna.
2. Persistent and undisturbed enemy air action along the

(103) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. cit., p. 89.

(104) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, marconigram of the 6th Army Command n. 17194/op of 5 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(105) M. PUDDU: *Guerra in Italia 1943-1945*, op. cit., p. 100-101.

(106) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, attachment 805/8; telex of the 6th Army Command n.17186/op of 5 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

front and the rear, causing the destruction and dispersal of artillery, trucks and ammunition depots.

3. Particular enemy pressure against the "H. Goering" Div. and the "Sizilien" Div..

4. Appreciation of the Germans for the contribution made by the Italian artillery at their disposal, but expressed dissatisfaction on behalf of our infantry because of "their poor armament, but also to insufficient strength of some units of the Aosta division."

5. Unchanged combative tenacity of the Germans, but they need to shorten the front "to economize some units to be used as a reserve to the left of the "Goering" Division. Also arose "Germans concerns for the supply of munitions & provisions & for transport".

6. "Agreement with General Hube another rearward line of resistance if they had to abandon the current one." This line, called "Tortorici" passed to the north of Etna and ran roughly from Zappulla station on the Tyrrhenian coast, to San Salvatore di Fitalia, Galati, Monte del Moro, Monte Colla, Randazzo, Monte Nero, Giarre, Torre Archirafi .

7. Pessimistic future assessment for the ongoing deterioration of the situation "mainly due to unopposed action enemy air force."

8. Confirmed retreat into Calabria of the units of the "Aosta" and "Assietta" and hope (later proved vain) to reconstitute in Sicily "Livorno" Inf. Div. with the "Nimbus" Paratroopers Regt. and an Inf. Regt. requested in Rome. At the same time the German demands and insistent about the influx time of the promised "Alps Graie" Alpine Div. into Sicily, but never arrived.

In the night between the 5th and 6th of August. Command of the 6th Army was set back from Portella Mandrazzi to Villa Salvati, in the Portella Armacera area near Messina, in view of his permanent transfer into Calabria, implemented, as we shall see, on 10 August ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾.

7. CONCERNS IN ROME ABOUT THE ACTIONS OF GERMAN FORCES IN ITALY

As took place in Sicily the last shown events, they were also clutching the timing for the exit of Italy from

(107) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/8: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 28.

the conflict. The achievement of such a solution was aiming long divergent groups of dissidents both abroad and in diplomatic circles, in the military and within the Royal Court itself. The result could not but be an inevitable lack of coordination of directives and strategies, which led inevitably to what De Risio strictly defines a "chaos in the armistice negotiations with the Allies, with a loss of dignity and Italy's reliability still difficult to value" ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾.

However, it is true that in those early days of August 1943 became increasingly concrete in Rome concerns about a possible German **surprise attack** against the Armed Forces of the Kingdom, not least following the confidences of the 3rd of the month by Adm. Canaris, head of the Abwehr, to Gen. Ame, head of the S.I.M., which we will return below. And the very next day, August 4, the S.M.R.E. He gave expression to these fears along with the following memo addressed to the Comando Supremo ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾.

"I have read the minutes of today's meeting between his Excellence Rossi and General Westphall.

In this regard I must point out:

1. - The German side, that until a few days ago was concerned both to strengthen the Southern Italy, and still two days ago declared that he absolutely had to ensure communications and rear of German troops in that part of the peninsula, not suddenly longer active, in the sense that it is proposed to allocate to the north all the reinforcements flowing into Italy.

2. - In the center of Italy there was only one Germanic G.U., the 3rd Panzer Division, which is located near Lake Bolsena. In recent days it has been reinforced by the influx of all the elements in motion and stationary train (breaks) in central Italy, and now it is even further with the least diversion of part of the 48 tail trains of the 26th armored division, they would have to continue for the Eboli area.

On the other hand, with the arrival of the 2nd Parachute Division, and with the arrest at Frascati of a "battle group" of the 3rd Division, originally intended, for it, the Eboli area, was set up south of Rome a mass of 8 battalions and a few batteries.

(108) C. DE RISIO: *Generali, servizi segreti e fascismo*, Milano 1978, p. 220.

(109) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, memos of the S.M.R.E., n. 26/CSM, of August 4, 1943. On that same day in Lisbon the Marquis d'Ajera informed the British Ambassador Campbell of the will for peace of the new Badoglio government, See. M. TOSCANO: *Gli archivi militari americani e gli armistizi italiani del 1943*, in "New Anthology", January 1966, and R. GUARIGLIA: *Ricordi*, Napoli 1950, pp. 587-599.

3. - Finally, one already accepted divisions, divisions and announced, so it tends to form in Liguria, Emilia and Romagna, a mass of four infantry divisions (65th, 76th, 94th, 305th) and four armored divisions (1st SS, Reich, two indeterminate), grouped into two Corps (SS, 87th), having lines of communications protected, the Brenner by 44th Division, and that of Tarvisio from the division deployed in Carinthia.

4. - As a result:

- The German forces in southern Italy are left, for the moment, to themselves (in the persuasion - says the P. G. - which the enemy will act against Northern Italy) ⁽¹¹⁰⁾;
- The German mass in central Italy has been and will be further reinforced (although the O.K. W. do not believe a dangerous opponent in the area), and deployed to the north and south of the capital;
- It assumes a deployment in northern Italy, which from the Riviera to the Maritime Alps and the Apennines, comes to the Romagna, to cover the Po Valley.

Militarily, this means that the P.G. intend to make sure, first of all, of the Po Valley, and get in a position to defend the Apennine mountain line, and - at least initially - assigns to the rest of Italy the simple bastion function.

The guidelines are explained by persuasion - already mentioned - that the enemy, given the internal situation, tends to hit the peninsula at the base, instead of the end or in the middle. But it is contrary to what we think of the enemy's intentions, and to our interests ⁽¹¹¹⁾.

In fact, unless we also adhere to the concert to bring the defense (or - at least - the main defense) to the Riviera- Romagna line, we should:

- to reinforce the whole defense device from Calabria - Puglia to Liguria;
- to distribute the maneuver masses into blocks, roughly corresponding to:
 - Southern Italy
 - Campania – Lazio
 - Toscana – Liguria

(110) P.G is to be understood as the "Germanic Part." Commenting on this statement one must say that in reality on 15 August following Field Marshal Kesselring, believing foresight threatened the Gulf of Salerno, insisted at the Italian Supreme Command to give the German 16th Division permission to move from Puglia to Eboli. Ambrosio tried to oppose this was anything but a "German belief of an Allied landing in northern Italy", but finally had to yield to the demands of Kesselring and 16th Div. to Eboli was moved on August 18 explicitly to a future enemy landing "in Sardinia and Corsica." See. A.U.S.E., folder 1504/C: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", phonograms of the Supreme Command No. 15923/op and 15988/op of 18 August 1943, and telegram by S.I.M. n. 42315/op of 18 August 1943.

(111) This security was not confirmed by Gen. Ambrosio when, as we said in the previous note, he opposed the transfer to Eboli of the German 16th Div. advocated by Kesselring.

5. - Except that there are circumstances that suggest that the military intentions of the O.K.W. to match different intentions.

These circumstances are:

- The fact that after the political upheaval of the 25 July, did the P.G. not bother to send urgent reinforcements to Italy, whereas before, in spite of the events of Sicily, one worried much less.
- The fact that these reinforcements flock in a hurry, and penetrate into our territory, without notice, perhaps for the ordinary way.
- The attitude of the units and tributaries commands, which behave as in the occupied country, and mention (albeit in rare individual cases by troops) to a march on Rome and the restoration of the Fascist regime;
- The advice given by the General Feurstein to his Exc. Gloria, to empty the rooms of the mine of works of art by way of the Brenner railway;
- The immediate seizure of such artwork and the insistence to ensure the protection of the *Earth's* (against whom?) By the aforesaid railway with an entire Germanic G. U.;
- The destination into Italy of an entire "SS" Corp., ie of huge forces by definition extremist, and specifically political hue ⁽¹¹²⁾;
- The facts of Athens (telex R/3/3477/ S.M. Of S.I.M. on August 3), which clearly show the existence of a plan for disarmament of the Italian forces;
- Reinforcement of the German mass located at the center of the peninsula, and its pincer placement around the Capital;
- The fact that in interview with Exc. Rossi Chief of the G.S from the O.B.S. announces next examined the dependency of the Germanic G.U. in Italy, dependencies on which would not require any discussion.

6. -Some of the abovementioned circumstances can be explained assuming that the O.K. W., loosely informed about the actual situation in Italy, considered that our country was falling apart and in complete anarchy, and has taken steps to ensure - despite this - the implementation of its military.

As it may be well - given the Germanic mentality - that some have suborders beyond protection -in practical application - by their orders.

However all convinced that the Reich has the intention) once implemented its military presence, proceeding surely (or - at least - if Italy were "do not to toe the line") to take the ladle in his hand, taking out the current regime, and restoring the past, or replacing it with a puppet government the Reich itself controlled.

In this case Italy would be reduced to an occupied state, type

(112) Only on 17 August; Gen. von Rintelen officially informed the Comando Supremo with dispatch n. 0765/43 setting up in northern Italy the so-called "Army Group B" of Gen. Rommel, composed of the LXXXVII Corps (76th, 94th and 305th Div.) by the LI Corps (44th Div. and the "Doehla" Brigade) and the II SS Corps ("Hitler" Div., 24th and 65th Div.) See folder 1504/C: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", the day August 17, 1943.

Norway, Denmark etc., Its armed forces would act on German orders exclusively in Germanic interests, and the country would be a theater of harsh operations in "*corpote vile**."

CONSIDERATIONS

Without entering on the possible solutions being political, I observe:

A) - First, and in any case, must be put in a position to parry any intolerable Germanic interference referred to n. 6, as well as with any of political nature measures, also with military order measures (adequate, immediate grouping of the available forces). These measures that -as known - only as of now and will be even more later on (if completed) as opposed to the needs of the defense against the Anglo-Saxons.

B) -In view, then, of this defense 'is essential to define whether it should be based on the Italian current concept (defense out of the peninsula); or the Germanic current concept (defense only out of northern Italy).

In the first case, the German forces should take the locations under n. 4.

In the second, the Italian forces in the peninsula, Tyrrhenian islands, France and the 2nd Army) starting with the most efficient, they should be grouped in northern Italy. "

To complete the subject it is recalled that on August 26 the Comando Supremo warned the Office of the German military attaché Gen. von Rintelen, the German troops then flowing from the Brenner could not cross the border only after the definition of common regulations for the defense of the borders and that the Italian troops would oppose by force in such a passage not agreed ⁽¹¹³⁾.

The following day, however, von Rintelen replied on behalf of the O.K.W. with a categorical message in which it refused to interrupt the flow of the German contingent "under the threat of arms" on part of the Comando Supremo and ensured that the movements of these troops had the sole purpose of protecting the German installations in the peninsula and " help Italy in the situation so far the hardest of this war" ⁽¹¹⁴⁾.

(113) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/D: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", the Supreme Command tele n. 16287/op August 26, 1943 addressed to the Office of the German military attaché in Italy.

(114) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/D: phonogram of the Office of the German military attaché in Italy n. Ia /0829/43 of August 27, 1943.

*Latin (worthless body)

After another four days of skirmishes, which tended to blame the representative is responsible for possible future incidents between Italian border units and the inflowing German troops, but that both sides were in fact to save time, August 31 --- that is, three days before the signing of the armistice of Cassibile - the Comando Supremo declared to the Superesercito to believe "now useless to discuss again and convenient access to the German requests", provided that it avoided that "our troops rely on Germans commands" ⁽¹¹⁵⁾.

(115) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/D: phonogram of the Supreme Command No. 16455/op of 31 August 1943 addressed to Superesercito. On the same day Gen. von Rintelen was replaced in the post of military attaché in Italy by General Toussaint with effect from 1 September 1943.

CHAPTER XII

THE RETREAT ON MESSINA AND
CLEARING OF SICILY

(6 to 17 August)

1. AERIL-NAVAL OPERATIONS UNTIL AUGUST 17

Since July 27 the US Navy had allocated in occupied Palermo the so-called Task Force 88 of Adm. Davidson, formed by cruisers *Philadelphia* and *Savannah* and six destroyers, with a mandate to support the advance of the 7th Army of Gen. Patton along the northern coast of Sicily ⁽¹⁾.

This light naval division, heedless of the fact that they are within the range of Axis planes stationed in Sardinia and in central and southern Italy and distant challenge from the Italian battle fleet deployed in the Gulf of Liguria, began on July 31 a series of coastal bombardment, targeting the batteries from St. Stefano di Camastra. It therefore performed in the night between 2 and 3 August the shelling of the Italian-German rear of S. Agata di Militello and Capo Orlando ⁽²⁾. On this occasion he was struck, among other things, the encampment headquarters of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. in Torrenova ⁽³⁾.

Direct threat on supply lines along the northern coast of Sicily, combined with the fear of local enemy amphibious operations, later then made, and the obvious

(1) S S.E. MORISON: *History of U.S. naval operations in World War II*, vol. IX: cit., Italian translation by the S.M.E., p. 298.

(2) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, radio message of the XVI Corps Command no. 01/10142 / op of August 3, 1943: "Summary of events from 12.00 on August 2 at 12.00 PM on August 3, 1943".

(3) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. from July 9 to August 13, 1943 ", p. 17.

mortification of the Italian naval reactive resources in a stretch of water facing only Axis bases, aroused great resentment in Rome, also aggravated by contemporary and equally undisturbed raids of British naval ships along the eastern coast of Sicily. Among other things, in fact, on August 2 British light means had targeted the Germanic armament bordering installations at Fiumefreddo south of Taormina.

Therefore at 18:05 on August 3 the Comando Supremo, at the height of indignation, this time not encouraged by now discredited Mussolini, addressed to Supermarina the following stern warning ⁽⁴⁾:

"It is no longer admissible that enemy naval activity in the lower Tyrrhenian and Ionian Seas is conducted continuously without opposition from us."

This was truly a of the first times after the Allied landing in Sicily in which the Comando Supremo to recall having not two but three Armed Forces and called explicitly for a naval intervention, perhaps even settling for a single demonstrative gesture by the Royal Navy, which also aligned on the date of 1 August, as we have seen in paragraph 1 of the previous chapter, even 293 ships, of which 124 are ready and efficient, as well as having, even the date of the armistice, of 58,100 tons of fuel oil ⁽⁵⁾.

So it was that, after an unsuccessful ambush conducted by Italian motor torpedo boats off Cape Orlando on the night of August 3 and that unfortunately marked the loss of *Ms. 66*, around midnight the same August 3 Supermarina dictated by the Fleet Command the harmonic telegram operating order 22608 for a naval bombardment of Palermo, basis of the Task Force 88 and largest airport of supplies for the US 7th Army ⁽⁶⁾.

(4) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/B: "Historical Diary of the Supreme Command." The Supreme Command tele n. 42183/op of 18.05 of August 3, 1943 addressed to Supermarina.

(5) AUSE, folder 1504/B: "Historical Diary of the Supreme Command". August 1, 1943. The availability of 58,100 tons of fuel oil from the R. Navy, on 8 September 1943 results from UFFICIO STORICO DELLA MARINA: *La Manna italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*: Vol. I: *Dati statistici*, Rome 1972, p. 277, A comparative title, please note that a battleship was "full" with up to 4,000 tons of fuel oil, a cruiser with about 1,500 tons and a destroyer with 500 tons.

(6) UFFICIO STORICO DELLA MARINA: *La Manna italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*: Vol. V: *Le azioni navali dal 1 aprile 1941 all'8 settembre 1943* op. cit., p. 479.

This mission was entrusted to the Cruisers of the 7th Division of Adm. Oliva with the *Eugenio di Savoia* and *Montecuccoli*, which sailed from La Spezia the evening of August 4 and stopped in La Maddalena, from where departed late in the afternoon of the 5th.

Once off Ustica at dawn of August 6, the two Italian cruisers spotted and shelled without result a small water tanker and the American escort submarine chaser *SC-503*, mistaking these ships for lurking enemy torpedo boats. This was considered sufficient by Adm. Oliva to abort the mission and return to base.

The behavior of Adm. Oliva was not approved by the Supermarina, which withdrew these "not true" sightings of torpedo boats carried out by the 7th Division ⁽⁷⁾. Today, however, we know that, thanks to Radio ULTRA decryption, the enemy knew the existence of the mission and therefore a false sighting and subsequent retreat were in truth providential for Italian ships ⁽⁸⁾.

Unbeknownst of the narrow escape, Supermarina wanted to attempt to remove the impression, in that heightened rather than diminished when, in operational sparingly and therefore decided to immediately replicate the action against Palermo, entrusting this time to the cruisers of the 8th Division of Adm. Fioravanzo.

The latter naval force formed by cruisers *Garibaldi* and *Duca d'Aosta*, set sail from Genoa at 20:10 on 6 August, also stopped in La Maddalena, from where departed twenty-four hours later directed to Ustica and then Palermo. However the early hours of the 8th the Division intercepted a message of discovery by a German reconnaissance plane, which signaled at 01:45 three large ships halfway between Palermo and Ustica, since Adm. Fioravanzo, no radar in a hazy area, ordered at 04:00 the return to the base ⁽⁹⁾.

Also this time Supermarina showed its dissatisfaction,

(7) *Ibid*, p. 484.

(8) A. Santoni: *Il vero traditore: ti ruolo documentato di ULTRA nella guerra del Mediterraneo*, op. cit., p. 243, Incidentally, remember that just the day of August 6 the Americans seized the island of Ustica, capturing hundred men in garrison and finding place over two hundred inmates between municipalities and politicians. See. T. DORLING (aka Taffrail): *Mediterraneo occidentale 1942-1945*, op. cit , p. 110-111.

(9) UFFICIO STORICO DELLA MARINA: *La Manna italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*: Vol. V: cit., Pp 484-488.

removing the Adm. Fioravanzo, newly arrived in La Spezia, from the Division command. But it was possible to demonstrate once again a few years ago that Americans, again informed by ULTRA signals, actually waiting for the upon the passage of the 8th Division with far more powerful cruisers *Savannah* and *Philadelphia*, accompanied by two destroyers, which, when the state ceased alarm, were left free to support a landing between S. Agata di Militello and the mouth of the Rosmarino creek in those same early hours of 8 August ⁽¹⁰⁾.

This American amphibious operation, conducted by the II/30th Inf. of the 3rd Division, embarked on seven LST seven LCT and an LCI, had suffered one day late due to an attack of four German planes at S. Stefano di Camastra, the starting point of the expedition, which had damaged an LST ⁽¹¹⁾. The purpose of the landing was to circumvent the German positions of St. Fratello, who resisted for two days the assaults of the US 15th Regimental Tactical Group, and usher in a series of amphibious actions "to leap frog" along the Tyrrhenian coast, once noting the lack of naval contrasts from part of the enemy.

Rescheduled for August 8 this land, as has been said, it was supported by cruisers *Savannah* and *Philadelphia* and was thwarted only by twenty-six Germanic F.W.190, but not any success ensued and the incursion paid with the loss of three attackers. But now, as we shall see later, the positions of the 29th Panzergrenadier Div. at St. Fratello had been overcome on the land front, so that the amphibious operation was the new target to cut the enemy retreat along the coastal highway 113. The American beachhead was however contained at S. Marco d'Alunzio the rearguard of the "Ulich" group that succeeded in eliminating this threat on German rear along the coast ⁽¹²⁾.

(10) A. Santoni: *Il vero traditore: ti ruolo documentato di ULTRA nella guerra del Mediterraneo*, op. cit., p. 246. Unfortunately route transfer the 8th Naval Division from La Spezia to Genoa was sunk on August 9 by a British submarine the destroyer *Gioberti* part of the escort.

(11) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 360.

(12) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: "Historical Military Diary of the 6th Army" - bulletin of 17:00 on August 9, 1943 from the XIV Corps Command of the German Army.

Instead remained cut off on the left bank of the Rosmarino the 435th Battalion of the XIX Coastal Brigade ⁽¹³⁾.

Despite the success of this first partial "frog jump", Gen Patton decided to make another small landing in Brolo, again with the II/30th Inf., for the night between 10 and 11 August.

This new amphibious operation was more bloody than expected, since the USAII/30th Inf., after being landed happily at Brolo by an LST, two LCI and six LCT at 02:40 on 11 August, reported 99 dead and 78 injured in a subsequent counterattack of the 71st Regt. of the 29th Panzergrenadier Div., a few days ago it reached the place, supported by the fire of the 29th Art. Regiment of the same German division ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Americans still managed to cut off the retreat on the coastal road to most of the remaining guns of the "Assietta" and the 500th Battalion of the XIX Coastal Brigade, although they can not prevent the German 71st Regiment of Leut. Col. Kruger to disengage and withdraw to the east in the shelter of energetic counterattacks of armored vehicles.

Simultaneously, the Luftwaffe kept engaged the warships of Task Force 88, sending against them in the afternoon of the 11th 24 F.W.190, which procured superficial damage to the cruiser *Philadelphia* and the submarine chaser *PC-542*.

The activities of the Task Force 88, however, suffered no interruptions and the early hours of August 16, this American Naval Division was again deployed to protect an unopposed landing of the 157th Regimental Tactical Group at Bivio Salica. This amphibious operation, which was to take place further east according suggestions of Gen. Truscott, fell flat, since the purpose was a area of land an already largely conquered by the US 7th Inf. Regiment.

Finally, on the morning of August 17 a US amphibious formation occupied without a fight Lipari and Stromboli ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Meanwhile, in the British sector units of the Royal Navy continued to daily carry out a series of coastal bombardments,

(13) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, phonogram the XVI Army Corp. Command 01/01474/op of August 9, 1943.

(14) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 393-399.

(15) T. DORLING (aka Taffrail): *Mediterraneo occidentale 1942-1945*, op. cit., p. 111.

culminating in a shelling in the Straits of Messina conducted the night between 9 and 10 August⁽¹⁶⁾.

For their part, the planes of the II Fliegerkorps performed in the nights on 10 and 12 August two massive raids against ground targets. In the first well-hundred twenty-eight bombers attacked in two waves at the ports of Augusta and Syracuse, damaging the British destroyers *Tynedale* and *Nubzan*, though at the price of seven Ju.88. The second of these incursions was instead directed against the runways between Lentini and Agnone at the hands of one hundred and twenty German bombers, which destroyed to the ground thirty enemy planes, while losing in turn ten. The same August 12 four assault F.W.190, took off from Calabria, was targeting near Augusta a convoy from Malta, procuring damage to British destroyer *Ledbury*⁽¹⁷⁾.

Even the British conducted an amphibious operation in mid-month, landing at 04:30 of August 16, 400 men of the 2nd Commando by two LST at Ali Marina, halfway between Messina and Taormina. The action, which is protected by the monitor *Roberts* and seven destroyers, however, had the same outcome of the Americans "frog jumps" along the northern coast, failing that is to cut off the retreat of the enemy to Messina and nor to obstruct the operations of evacuation beyond the Straits⁽¹⁸⁾. Indeed, the English unit landed at Ali Marina and commanded by Lt. Col. Churchill was held back by demolitions and roadblocks set up by the retreating Germans and was then beaten by a few hours in his race to Messina by the vanguards of the 7th Inf. Regt. of the American 3rd Division, who first entered the coveted city at dawn of August 17⁽¹⁹⁾.

In those days of mid-August, when it was in full swing the evacuation of Sicily, other more far ranging air operations were conducted in the western Mediterranean and along the coast of North Africa by the bombers of the German 26th Stormo of

(16) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, phonogram of the XVI Army Corp Command n. 01/01515/op of 10 August 1943.

(17). A. Santoni -F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, op. cit., pp 444-445.

(18) G.W. NICHOLSON: *The Canadians in Italy*, Op. cit., p. 171.

(19) It was above all the destruction of a bridge between Tremestieri and Messina that delay just enough the race of the British to lose their coveted race with the troops of Patton. See. M. Blumenson: *Sicily: Whose victory?*, Op. cit., p. 146.

based in the south of France and the Italian torpedo bombers of the 132nd Group transferred to Sardinia. At the same time progressed the bombing of the Allied Air Forces against the railway junctions and airports in central-southern Italy, among which the raids on Viterbo of 29 July, 1 August of Naples and Rome on 13 August.

Other bombings against the German airfields in southern France, together with the protection and surveillance cruises, led the "Mediterranean Air Command" add up to between 29 July and 17 August a good 27,620 missions, during which the Allies destroyed 216 German and 9 Italian aircraft, while losing 141, in addition to the 59 that were destroyed during the famous American incursion of August on the Ploesti oil refineries in Romania ⁽²⁰⁾.

2. LAND OPERATIONS FROM 6 TO 9 AUGUST AND THE EVACUATION OF REMAINING UNITS ITALIAN

(See Maps n. 27 and n. 28)

The US accounts agree in defining the battle of Troina that began virtually on August 1st, as we saw in the previous chapter, the bloodiest amongst those endured by the 7th Army of Patton in Sicily ⁽²¹⁾. Here they faced up to 6 August in fierce fighting for control of the very important highway 120 the entire American 1st Inf. Div., reinforced by the 39th Inf. Regiment of the 9th Division, and the German "Fullriede" regiment supported to the south by the "Ens Group", backup by the artillery of the "Assietta" and I/5th Inf. of the "Aosta", the latter held in line by the Germans on the Serra Castagna until the afternoon of August 6, despite the known evacuation orders issued by Gen. Guzzoni on days 2 and 3 ⁽²²⁾.

Lieut. Col. Gianquinto, commander of I/5th Inf., earned on the occasion the German Iron Cross, but the battalion, who retired

(20) A. Santoni -F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, op. cit., pp: 446-447.

(21) According to Eisenhower in this area Axis troops carried out twenty-four distinct counterattacks. See. D.D. EISENHOWER: *Crociata in Europa*, op. cit., p. 229.

(22) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: " Report on the activity carried out by the units of the "Aosta" Inf. Div. from 4 to 11 August 1943". Pp. 4-6.

finally towards Pizzo Maulazzo the afternoon of the 6th, with only 170 men remaining ⁽²³⁾.

As we have seen, the breakthrough made on August 3 by the British 78th Inf. Div. on the most southern of Centuripe positions had endangered the left side of the line in defense of Troina and had prompted Gen. Hube to prepare a retreat on August 5 " of the "Fullriede" and "Ens" groups until the junction of Monte Pelato - Traina - Revisotto, as well as a contemporary withdraw of the "H. Goering", of the "Schmalz" group and the Germanic Paratroops on the line Adrano - Belpasso - North of Catania. They moved the same August 5 the southern locations of Misterbianco and Paterno had been occupied by the British 5th Inf. Div. and Catania, as is known, had fallen into the hands of the English 50th Inf. Div.

The Traina positions were so exposed to a British bypass through the valley of the Simeto and were then abandoned by Lieut. Col. Fullriede on August 6 into the hands of the US 16th Tactical Group Regimental. On the road in retreat to Cesarò fired their last shots three survivors 90/53 Semoventi of the CLXII group, two of whom later managed to reach Messina.

The following day, the US 9th Inf. Div. leaped frontline of the 1st Division of Gen. Terry. Allen, who was replaced by Gen. Huebner due to differences with the irascible Patton ⁽²⁴⁾.

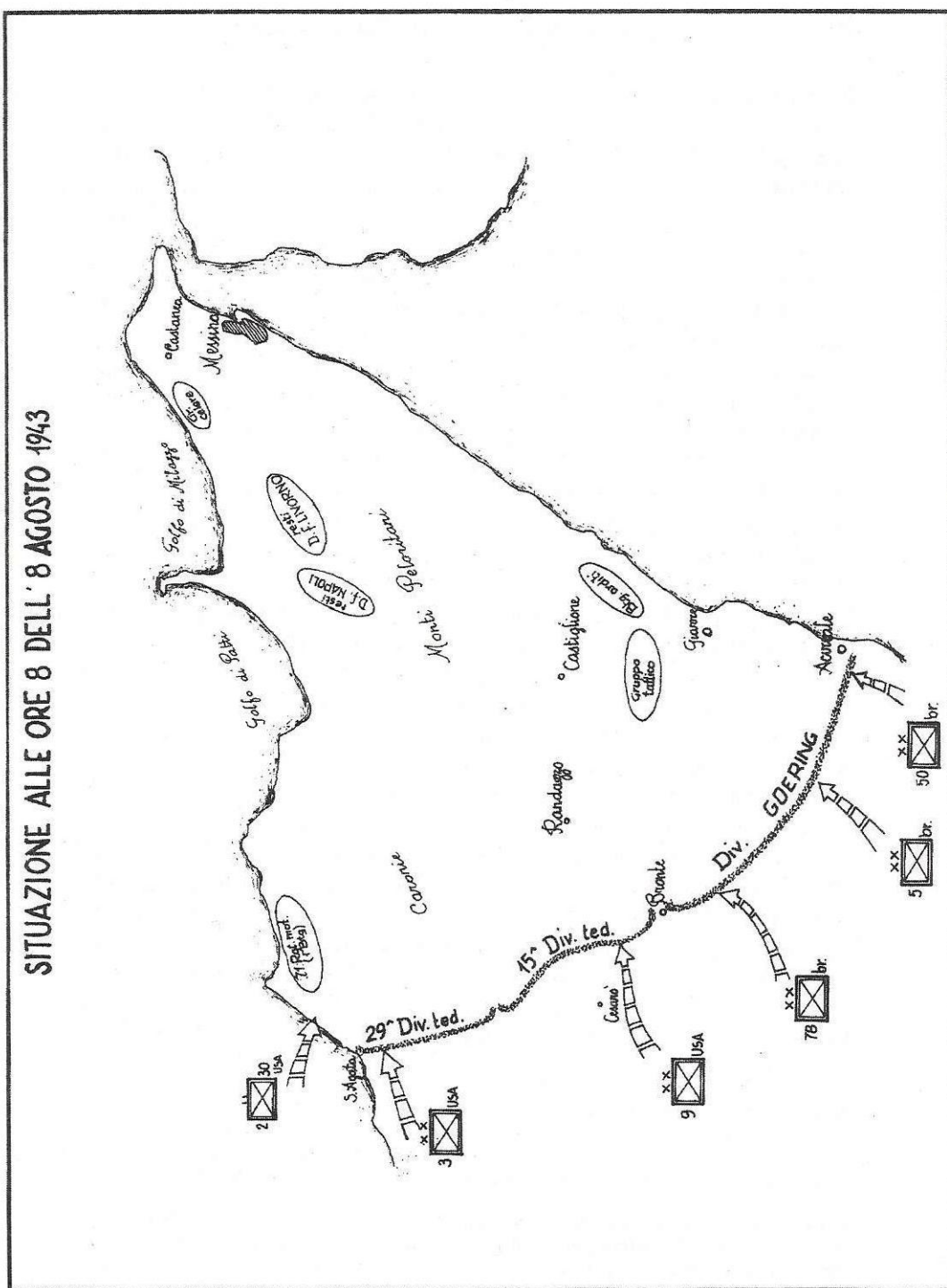
The new front of "H. Goering" between Adrano and Belpasso remained standing for only twenty-four hours, Belpasso falling on August 6 in the hands of the English 5th Inf. Div. and Adrano on the night of

(23) *Ibid*, p. 7. II/5th Inf. "Aosta" crossed the Strait on August 10 under enemy air attacks, accompanied by the III Battalion and the command of the same regiment, while the 6th Inf. Regiment. "Aosta" had already reached the Calabria since 8 August. The 5th and 6th Inf. Regiment "Aosta", were then sent to Avellino, where they arrived on the 12th, reduced respectively to 600 and 700 men, despite the replacements procured from the collection centers of stragglers, *Ibid*, p. 8-11.

(24) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 310 and U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 347, Gen. Patton remained famous for His uncontrollable outbursts, at two separate field hospitals in Sicily (15th & 93rd evacuation hospitals) two soldiers, but actually suffering from, air and disorders nervous system, and instead held by the bad tempered US General as rotten cowards. Following intransigent than just condemnation of the incident by General Eisenhower, Patton was later forced to apologize to the two soldiers in question, as well as medical personnel involved field hospitals. See. M. Blumenson: *Sicily: Whose victory?*, Op. cit., p. 150-152 and U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 426-431.

TAVOLA N. 28

SITUAZIONE ALLE ORE 8 DELL' 8 AGOSTO 1943



the 6th and 7th into the hands of the British 78th Inf. Div., who also occupied Bronte on the evening of the 8th, set foot on the ancient estates of Admiral Nelson. Along the Ionian coast instead of the English 50th Inf. Div. came to Acireale on that day, advancing on the main road 114⁽²⁵⁾.

On the northern front, which ran along the Furiano stream, numerous assaults of the American 15th Inf. Regiment of the 3rd Division had been repulsed by the Germans of the 29th Grenadier Division of Gen. Fries that, with the union of its 15th and 71st Inf. Regt. and 29th Art. Regt., assumed the exclusive responsibility of this sector. The US command then entrusted to the numerous available artillery, on 6 August raining on the front of the "Ulich" group (15th Panzergrenadier Regt.), in a area only three kilometers large, from 8,000 to 10,000 hits⁽²⁶⁾. It was simultaneously developed a naval bombardment and an armored attack, which finally realized infiltration south of St. Fratello and cut the highway for Cesarò, threatening the rear of the same "Ulich" group.

Gen. Fries was then forced to withdraw during the night of the 7th on the ridge of Naso, that is, on the north end of the already provided back line called "di Tortorici". It was on account to avoid the turning of the German 29th Div. by the already mentioned US landing at S. Agata di Militello of the first hour of August 8, after which, however, remained cut off, as we mentioned, the 435th Battalion of the XIX Coastal Brigade. For their part, the remains of the I and II Battalions of the 29th Inf. Regiment of the "Assietta" - which as we know were for the time being excluded from evacuation orders issued by Guzzoni on 2 and 3 August - were dispersed and pursued by the US 7th Inf. Regiment of the 3rd Div. and they were tracked down near Galati only on August 9, when Cesarò also had fallen into the hands of the American 9th Inf. Div.⁽²⁷⁾.

As for the Artillery and the "Assietta" included

(25) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps": page. 186. The only Italian unit still in line in the area of the "H. Goering" was now the XXIX Art. group of Lt. Col. Catazzo.

(26) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: "Daily Bulletin of the German XIV Corps of 24:00 on August 6, 1943".

(27) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report on the operations of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. from July 9 to July to 13 August 1943", p. 19; folder 1175 bis, phonograms of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. Command. n. 2732/op of 8 August 1943, n. 2741/op of 9 August 1943, n. 2747/op of 10 August 1943.

the sector of the 29th Panzergrenadier Div., only 3rd bty. 149/13 from the CXXI group and 2nd bty. 105/28 from the XLVIII group managed to bring to completion without loss the withdraw on Naso. However of, the 1st bty. 75/27 of the I/22nd Art. "Aosta" there was no more news, the 1st and 2nd bty. 149/19 from the CLVII group lost along the way three pieces of five, while the remaining batteries just one piece of 75/27 of the III/25th Art. reached the designated area.

Among the various hypotheses it was thought that during the night the missing Italian batteries appeal to have been "lost in the woods," or they were intercepted by enemy armored or air force means ⁽²⁸⁾. The American official report however says that on that occasion, "Italians do not seriously contrasted the American advance" and that "the soldiers of the Assietta surrendered en masse, about a thousand just to the Doleman battalion" ie, to the US III/30th Inf. ⁽²⁹⁾.

However, the remaining batteries of the "Assietta" listed above, reinforced by two other pieces of 105/28 and a 149/19, intervened on Aug. 9 against the advancing American 3rd Inf. Div. on the Naso line, but they were too unfortunately cut off two days later by the American landing at Brolo. Therefore, only two pieces of 149/19 and a piece of 149/13 were the only survivors of the artillery of the "Assietta" and that gradually made available to the same division from the Army Command and Corps in throughout the Sicilian countryside. These three pieces retired first to Ucria and then to Messina.

The new LV Group of Lt. Col. Arpaia managed instead to join the remains of artillery available to the "Aosta" (two bty. of the CLI group and two bty. of the XXI Group) withdrawn from the line at Randazzo and then Messina between 7 and 10 August.

Finally on August 10, as we shall see later, all traces of infantry of the "Assietta" (remains of the listed I and II Battalions of the 29th Inf.) Were ordered to evacuate Sicily and retire to Calabria ⁽³⁰⁾.

(28) A.U.S.E., folder 1175 bis, phonogram of the Command of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. n. 2741/op of August 9, 1943.

(29) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: Sicily and the surrender of Italy, op. cit., p. 366.

(30) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Historical Journal of Military XVI Corps No. 01/10433/op 8 August 1943, and phonogram of the "Assietta" Inf. Div. Command from July 9 to August 13, 1943". Pp. 19-21.

Withdraw in function of the coastal defense or destined for the ferry to Calabria from August 3-in based on the known radio messages of Guzzoni n. 17118 and n. 17152 of the 2nd and 3rd - both the infantry of the "Aosta" (excluded for the time being the I/5th Inf.) and the command of the "Assietta" infantry divisional and withdrawn from the front between 6 and 10 August the I/5th Inf., the I and II Battalions of the 29th Inf. and all the Italian artillery, Gen. Hube remained with the only German units to handle the line of fire in the last week of the Sicilian campaign.

The commander of the XIV Panzer Corps, as we know directed since August 2 the entire Sicilian front, had planned to hold the enemy advance on three extreme resistance lines. In fact in the official report of Gen. Guzzoni, under date of August 6, we read the following ⁽³¹⁾:

"The order of the XIV Corps Command provided further retreats:

-Night on 8 August: S. Agata di Militello -Pizzo Fontanazzo -Monte Soro - junction to Bronte - Zone 3 km southeast of Monte Ruvolo - Mount St. Leo.

- Night On 10 August: west of Rocca C. -S. Marco d'Alunzio Rocche del Crasto - Serra del Re -Serra Candela - Monte Maletto -Monte Etna. With this, starting from Monte Maletto the resistance on the defined positions were reached (Tortorici line).

-Night On 12 August: the 29th division and the 15th and the extreme right wing of the "Goering" division had to reach the final resistance line (Tortorici line)"

Please note that the "Tortorici line" was the ultimate goal of the aforesaid German retreating in fits and starts, was the face of extreme defense of the north-eastern tip of Sicily, chosen by agreement between Guzzoni and Hube since August 4 and made known to Superesercito the 5th of the month ⁽³²⁾.

On the afternoon of August 8 Guzzoni reported to S.M.R.E. and Hube his fear of losing control of the Messina Strait in case of an enemy landing in Calabria and that therefore the evacuation of the Command of the 6th Army was logical ⁽³³⁾. It was in fact

(31) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", the day on August 6, p. 29

(32) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, attachment 805/8: telex from 6th Army Command n. 17186/op of 5 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E. According to what was said and what we will say in the following pages are thus all to review the opinions expressed in this regard to date, untainted by inadequate documentation or preconceptions.

(33) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, phonogram of the 6th Army Command n. 17273/op 17:30 hours of 8 August 1943 addressed to S.M.R.E.

precisely as a result of that communication, which Superesercito authorized the early hours of 9 August, the transfer of command of the 6th Army to Calabria ⁽³⁴⁾. In particular the fundamental phonogram n. 1486/op of that day gave the following provisions to Guzzoni:

"This Command is authorized to bring into Calabria maintaining Command of the Sicilian & Calabria area and the Forts of Messina & Reggio. They may also be brought into Calabria the Italian troops no longer needed for the island defense."

Having received important authorization to evacuate Sicily with the Command of the 6th Army and the remaining Italian troops no longer deemed necessary to the defense, Guzzoni at 11:30 on August 9 of that expressed to the S.M.R.E. unease to "decide if the German Corps should remain to defend the last Sicily strip, or whether that task should be reserved for the troops of the Italian XVI Corps" ⁽³⁵⁾. However, he hastened to add that he had chosen the first "painful decision", ordering them to "withdraw into Calabria soon the XVI Corps Command & the remnants of the divisions "Assietta" & "Livorno" & as much as is possible to recover, & leave the German XIV Corps the task to continue the struggle until last, the fight that the other side has supported for some time alone, " ⁽³⁶⁾.

Therefore, at 18:15 and 18.30 of August 9, with two subsequent messages, the Commander of the 6th Army made known to the O.B.S. and the command of the XIV Corps of Hube successful authorization from Rome of the evacuation of Italian troops still remaining in Sicily, including combatants with German units. Were excluded for the moment only the remains of the 213th Coastal Div. and XIX Coastal Brigade, made available by Gen. Bozzoni, new-commander of the Forts of Messina -Reggia C., and placed under the German higher orders ⁽³⁷⁾.

(34) A.U.S.E., folder 2229. of phonograms S.M.R.E., n. 1485/op and n. 1486/op of 9 August 1943 addressed to the Commander of the 6th Army.

(35) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, phonogram of the Commander 6th Army. 17280/op of hours of August 9, 1943 11:30 addressed to S.M.R.E.

(36) *Ibid.*

(37) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, phonogram Command 6th Army n. 17285/op of 18:15 of August 9, 1943 addressed to the O.B.S. and telepress by motorcyclist from the Command 6th Army n. 178288/op of 18:30 on 9 August 1943 addressed to the Command of the German XIV Corps. The Command of the XVIII Coastal Brigade officially ceased to operate on August 10, while remaining available to the Command of the Italian XVI Corps. See. Folder 1427 "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 191.

Guzzoni also announced the transfer of his same Army Command onto the continent, to S. Procopio, east of Bagnara, from 12:00 on 10 August, and confirmed the attribution of the final "defense of the island's territory to the German XIV Corps" ⁽³⁸⁾.

At the same time, with phonogram 17287/op, Gen. Guzzoni ordered the command of the XVI Corps of Gen. Rossi, transferring to Gambarie in Calabria, the detailed provisions for evacuation, after having conferred, by order of the Supreme Command, also disciplinary authority over the Messina Naval Command ⁽³⁹⁾.

To complete the analysis of the Italian decision to clear from the island the remnants of the national units, finally, it must be recalled that General Guzzoni, considering that the tasks of the Independent Naval Command of Sicily now concerned "only the traffic through the Strait, however, much reduced" he had proposed since 8 August to the SMRE its dissolution, resulting in transfer tasks of Adm. Barone to Rear Adm. Parenti ⁽⁴⁰⁾. The Comando Supremo in fact authorized the requested elimination of the Autonomous Naval Command of Sicily on August 11, six days before the conclusion of the campaign ⁽⁴¹⁾.

On this occasion it is recalled that on 24 August, the Comando Supremo also abolished the Naval Bases Commands of Taranto, Brindisi, La Spezia, La Maddalena, Venice and Pala, creating in their place many naval bases with local Military Maritime Command. The territory of the abolished Naval Bases was added to the defensive organization of the Army and the defense of the naval bases was assigned to the Command of the Army Corps and territorial defense ⁽⁴²⁾.

(38) A.U.S.E., folder 2229. above mentioned two phonograms of August 9, 1943.

(39) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, or phonogram Command 6th Army. 17287/Op of 9 August 1943 addressed to the Command of the XVI Corps and folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 32.

(40) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 32.

(41) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/C: "Supreme Command of the Historical Journal", phonogram of the Supreme Command No. 42252/Op 11 August 1943.

(42) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/D: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", dispatch of the Supreme Command No. 16227/op of 24 August 1943.

3. THE TRANSERING OF ITALIAN UNITS

On August 10, the Command of the 6th Army and the Command of the XVI Army Corps had already ferried over the Strait of Messina and were in Sinopoli near Bagnara and respectively at Gambarie on the Aspromonte ⁽⁴³⁾.

At 01:20 on August 12 the S.M.R.E. would determined that 08:00 from the 14th all commands of the 6th Army units, or tributaries moved into Calabria, excluding commands Artillery, Engineers, Carabinieri and Intendenza, would pass in the employ of the 7th Army of Gen. Mario Arisio, who "took the jurisdiction of Calabria sector including the Calabrian Naval Base of Messina - Reggio" ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

In communicate to Gen. Hube these passage of dependency, Guzzoni took the opportunity to ask the commander of the German XIV Armored Army Corps, remaining on the island, the following letter of appreciation ⁽⁴⁵⁾:

"The bloody battle of Sicily, together fought in full brotherhood of arms and intent, has placed once again highlighted the high value of the German Army and the long operating capacity of commands that guide it. For so much I am proud to acknowledge and I thank the generous contribution that the XIV Army Corps to your orders has given and gives to the defense of Sicily."

Simultaneously with this praise addressed to the entire German XIV Army Corps, the Commander of the 6th Army asked to the S.M.R.E. in that same 13 August, the granting of high Italian awards to German officers who distinguished themselves particularly in operations in Sicily. Here is the text of the request ⁽⁴⁶⁾:

"The resistance to the predominant Anglo-Saxon forces on the island, the German troops had the majority. I am advising

(43) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/C: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command": "Summary of events until at 08:30 am of 11 August 1943".

(44) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: "Historical Military Diary of the 6th Army", tele-cipher from the S.M.R.E. n. 11/31486/op of 01:20 hours of August 12, 1943.

(45) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: "Historical Military Diary of the 6th Army", phonogram Command 6th Army n. 17347/op of 13 August 1943 addressed to Gen. Hube, commander of the German XIV Corps..

(46) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, marconigram of the Command 6th Army in 230 P/S of 19:30 of 13 August addressed to S.M.R.E.

that despite the Axis troops are forced to haul down on the island the Italian flag, to be recognized, with a reward at the value to the highest leaders the valuable contribution and the blood of the ally.

Military Order of Savoy to General Hube, Conrath, Rodt, Fries, Heidrich, von Senger and to Colonel Schmalz.

Silver Medal to the Colonels Baade, Ulich, Kruger, Valta, Fischer, Polack, von Bonin, Heckel, Bosch; to Lt. Col. Fullriede, Ens, Heilmann, Mauck, Simon, von Stuenzer, Bergengruen, Haring"

Meanwhile the operations of ferry over the Strait of Italian units, started, as is known, on August 3 following the repeatedly mentioned dispatch of Guzzoni n. 17118/Op the previous day, were met with difficulties. There provides a testimony to the Report of Col. Franco Salamo, in charge since 1 August in command of a special "start-unit" in Messina, in charge of "supply and sorting of the Army units remnants on the mainland. "

This report is also critical to the statistical data on men and vehicles of the 6th Army ferried daily into Calabria August 3 to 12 and the list of main commands evacuated, as well as the considerations referred to below ⁽⁴⁷⁾.

"The enemy attack, which was uninterrupted throughout the period August 3 to 12, reduced as the means available up to limit them to only one ferry and three landing craft, forcing to perform transport also during the day with successive trips. This has determined that, to be able to ferry the greatest number of men and not to be the aforesaid means equipped for the transport vehicles in quantities, yes is due to avoid the passage of trucks and further limit the number of cars for straight passage.

In detail they were ferried:

On August 3	men 1,985	vehicles 32
On August 4	men 2,876	vehicles 33
On August 5	men 2,785	vehicles 31
On August 6	men 3,321	vehicles 15
On August 7	men 3,456	vehicles 13
On August 8	men 3,109	vehicles 14
On August 9	men 2,800	vehicles 7

(47) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: "Report on the welcoming units in Calabria region» dated August 12, 1943.

On August 10	men 7,800	vehicles 21
On August 11	men 11,800	vehicles 18
On August 12	men 18 000	vehicles 30 (cars only)
	(estimated)	
TOTAL men 57,932		vehicles 214

In the number of vehicles are not ferried including motorcycles (about 300). No artillery piece was ferried with the exception of three-pieces of 122⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Units ferried: Army Command. Commands XII and XVI Corps. Army Intendenza Staff, Command of the "Aosta" Inf. Div., Commands of the 33rd and 29th Infantry, with flag, elements of the "Livorno" and "Assietta" Inf. Div., 5th and 6th infantry Regt., 22nd and 28th Artillery Regt., 6th, 12th, and 22nd artillery groupings, 13th Truck Group, XI Sappers Battalion, II Special Assault Battalion, the 1st water company, the 7th anti-fire company, 100th and 140th Marconi radio company, 143rd telegraph company, 47th sappers company, 36th chemical Company, CXXXVIII, CXL and CXLI Art groups of 88/55, 3 batteries of 149/35, Depots of the 3rd and 5th Inf., and 24th Art., different various elements of military districts and local governments 356th, and 357th forestry companies (allophones), Departments and Offices of the Inland and territorial defense, various minor units."

We must also remember "about the evacuation of Italian troops, that on 10 August Gen. Bozzoni, commander of Messina -Reggia Calabria Naval Base, had been ordered by Guzzoni, to leave at the junction of Gesso and north of Moleti, according to the instructions given by local Germanic roadblock, all trucks and the weapons which could not be brought beyond those localities "by the evening of the 11th"⁽⁴⁹⁾.

On the morning of the 12th But they came to the Base Command some reports that the Germans had begun to take over the Italian military vehicles since noon, instead of the evening of 11 August, as seemed to have been established⁽⁵⁰⁾.

(48) Of the 18,000 people estimated to August 12 were actually ferried 6,500, while in day 13, 14 and 15 would be transported beyond the Strait respectively, 5,800, 13,500 and 6,000 men. These latest figures are from the report of Gen. Bozzoni n/01/208/op date August 15, 1943 in A.U.S.E., folder 2329. Among the departments ferried on August 11 was the staff of the tactical groups of Languaglossa and of Divieto.

(49) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, phonogram Command 6th Army n. 17298/op August 10, 1943, Col. von Bonin wrote that "the city of Messina and its surroundings were banned to all Italian vehicles in order to prevent the movement into the Messina area." See. A.U.S.E., folder 2266: "Considerations on the Italian campaign of 1943-1944 of Colonel Bogislav von Bonin, Chief of G.S. of the German XIV Corps in Sicily ", p. 25

(50) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XIV Corps," pp. 196-197.

Indeed Gen. Hube had clearly communicated to Guzzoni that the cut-off time was 11 noon, so that is not explained the misunderstanding occurred between the Italian Commands in the issued agreement. In fact in a service memo from Gen. Faldella to Gen. Guzzoni on 17:30 of August 10 it reads verbatim:

"The General Hube intends to leave no longer move any animal or motorized vehicle towing from 12:00 on the 11th north of the junction of Gesso and north of Moleti. "Gen. Hube is of the opinion that up to 12:00 the motor vehicles of Italian units can reach Messina, but after that time can no longer go beyond the two specified points" ⁽⁵¹⁾.

In another statement of Gen. Bozzoni finally turned out that on 13 August had been "loaned" to the Germans 51 trucks to transport their materials ⁽⁵²⁾. That which greatly resize the amount of unjustified seizures of Italian cars by German troops in those circumstances.

An undeniable inconvenience during that day evacuation period was instead represented through damage occurred on 11 August to large ferry *Canddi*. This incident shortly following the fire on the other ferry *Villa S. Giovanni*, who according to Gen. Bozzoni was arson ⁽⁵³⁾.

From a sheet prepared on the 16th, but referred to the August 14 show that would have been ferried to Calabria at that time about 70,000 Italian soldiers, along with 34 artillery pieces with tractors, 38 anti-tank guns of 47/32, 3 guns of 122/45 and about 300 vehicles ⁽⁵⁴⁾. On August 17, then Gen. Guzzoni relate generally and inaccurately to the S.M.R.E. who had been transferred a total of 75,000 men to Calabria, 100 artillery pieces and 500 vehicles ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

As for the artillery, it must be said that, despite being evacuated the commands of some groups and some batteries, as is clear from the known list of units ferried compiled by Col. Salamo, no artillery piece was transported beyond the

(51) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: service memo of Gen. Faldella, Chief of Staff of the 6th Army, of Gen. Guzzoni of 17:30 hours of August 10, 1943.

(52) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: phonogram Command Naval Base of Messina - Reggio Calabria n. 01/202/op of 15 August 1943.

(53) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: 818/7 Annex to August 18, 1943, p. 4.

(54) A.U.S.E., folder IT 1125, the day August 16, 1943.

(55) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: marconigram 6th Army Command n. 17425/op of 17 August 1943.

Straits by Italian vessels, with the exception of three cannons 122/45, The totality of lack of Italian field artillery saved from the retreat to Messina was in fact ferried out by the Germans, who "believed a debt of honor to pass to complete the units that had fought with them" ⁽⁵⁶⁾. In the single day of 13 August, for example, the German landing craft transported to Calabria 34 guns, 26 tractors and 46 trucks ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Not, however, lacking instances by more or less forced abandonment of weapons of all kinds, including artillery and carriages of the 22nd Art. Regiment and CLVII group, as well as episodes of uncalled for giving to the population of military quadrupeds by non military drivers. These facts were denounced by Gen. Bozzoni in his report, dated 15 August, in which he stressed "the loosening of disciplinary constraints", illustrating also a number of accidents at the boarding points of Messina in the 13th day, which among other things had led to the death of two soldiers and the wounding of another thirteen ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

The same Gen. Bozzoni then compiled on August 18 a "final report of the northeastern cusp clearing operations of Sicily" in which, while not providing an overall military figures and Italian media evacuated from the island 3 to 16 August, he dwelt on the following qualifying points ⁽⁵⁹⁾.

- A clear demonstration that "even if theoretically the Maritime Military (Navy) Autonomous Command had investigated the possibility of an evacuation of the island, though neither had prepared appropriate means" ⁽⁶⁰⁾. Among other things, without use of the *Cadiddi* took place on August 11 was followed by not showing the day the 15th of the promised tugboat with which the big ferry, already loaded with 31 pieces of artillery, would have to be towed to the across the Straits. This resulted in the need to sabotage the ship and the loss of valuable material board ⁽⁶¹⁾.

(56) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, attachment 814/3 and phonogram 6th Army Command n. 17415/op August 16, 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(57) A.U.S.E., folder 2229. Report n. 01/208/op of 15 August 1943 of Gen. Bozzoni, n. 01/208/op of 15 August 1943.

(58) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: cited report of Gen. Bozzoni n.01/208/op of 15 August 1943.

(59) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: Annex 818/17 "Final Report of the north eastern cusp of the clearing operations in Sicily" on August 18, 1943.

(60) *Ibid*, p. 3

(61) *Ibid*, p. 2

- Shameful contrast between the few remaining Italian ferries (4 landing craft, of which only 3 active duty) and "the eighty German landing craft that with clockwork every six minutes you ask detach themselves from boarding, to carry to the other side not only their precious cargo, but trucks fitted with all good things, loaded on the island" ⁽⁶²⁾.
- Lack Of the Royal Navy personnel, who made less regular trips across the Straits, because "of removal of the crewmen who were to be sought after by the Police on one or the other side before they can start the next trip" ⁽⁶³⁾.
- Abnegation by other anonymous elements, officers and enlisted men, "that under the brutishness air attacking action valiantly have done their duty" ⁽⁶⁴⁾

The most reliable data relating to the evacuation of the remaining Italian troops from Sicily between 3 and 16 August, based on a more accurate control of the information available, they amount to 62,000 the number of soldiers approximate transferred to the Straits there, along 45 artillery guns, 227 vehicles and 12 mules. Another 32,500 Italian soldiers, including many wounded and sick, having been brought to the continent on previous occasions.

The Italians units moved to Calabria were gradually started into the collection and sorting centers, organized by the command of the 7th Army 9of Gen. Arisio locations in Vallo della Lucania (commanded by Gen. Maraschini) and between Benevento and Avellino (commanded by Gen. Perrotti). Many elements, however, mostly belonging to the XVI Corps, evacuated after the XII Corps, had to camp until 21 August on the Aspromonte, exposed to the rigors of the night high altitudes without proper tents or kitchens field ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

On 24 August, the Command of the XXXI Corps, part of the 7th Army, called the remains of the "Assietta" and

(62) *Ibid*, p. 4. That only four Italian landing craft were serviceable had remained since August 13 had also been reported by Gen. Guzzoni to the S.M.R.E. with phonogram n. 17354/op of 13 August 1943. See. A.U.S.E., folder 2229.

(63) *Ibid*, p. 4.

(64) *Ibid*, p. 4.

(65) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, phonogram of the 7th Army Command No. 2/7641 of 25 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

the troops of the "Livorno" in deep shock and very low morale, physically tired and undernourished, militarily inefficient" ⁽⁶⁶⁾. For the same reasons it was not recommended to use, if only as complements, the remains of the 213th Coastal Div. very shaken, since they would have "ruined with their contagion any troops deployed for combat." He instead suggested to grant necessary and proper turn of rest to Gen. Chirieleison of the "Livorno", to Gen. Schreiber of the "Assietta" and to Gen. Gotti of the 213th Coastal Div. ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

4. LAND OPERATIONS FROM 10 TO 17 AUGUST (See Map n. 29)

As he noted in the report of Gen. Guzzoni and as we have already reported, the Command of the German XIV Corps (Gen. Hube) had planned three folding steps to be carried out respectively in the nights of 7, of the 9 and on 11 August so as to reach in fit and starts the mentioned line of extreme resistance "of Tortorici," agreed between Guzzoni and Hube on August 4 and communicated to the SMRE on the 5th ⁽⁶⁸⁾.

We also know that from 3 to 10 August all the Italian Commands in Sicily had had permission to evacuate the island, a momentary exception of the remains of the 213th Coastal Div. and XIX Coastal Brigade, made available by Gen. Bozzoni, new commander of the Messina-Reggia Square C. Base, and subjected themselves to the higher orders of Gen. Hube.

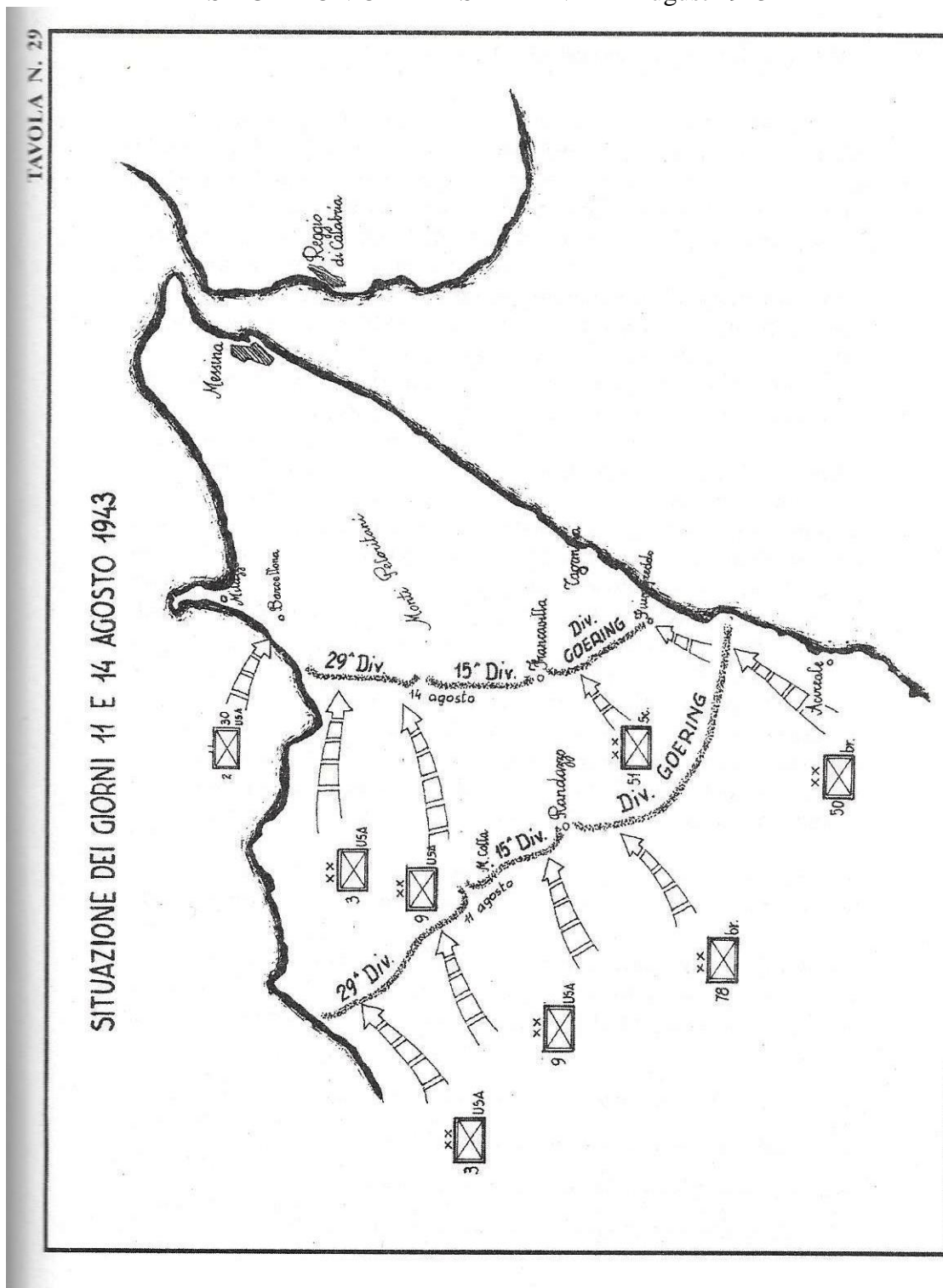
The XIX Coastal Brigade, after losing to bypass on 8 August its 435th Battalion on the banks of the Rosmarino creek, also suffered the withdraw and the capture of nearly all its 500th Battalion after the landing of the American II/30th Inf. at Brolo on the 11th of the month. The remains of the brigade were therefore withdrawn by Gen. Hube even more to the east, beyond Furnari.

(66) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: "Situation troops returned from Sicily." page no. 01/11940 dated 24 August 1943 of the XXXI Corps Command.

(67) *Ibid.*

(68) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943 ", p. 29 and folder 2229, attachment 805/8: telex Command 6th Army n. 17186/op dated 5 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E

SITUATION OF DAYS 11th AND 14 August 1943



On the same day of the 11th, the 213th Coastal Div. was moved from Fiumefreddo on the Ionian sector to the line S. Filippo -S. Lucia del Mela, behind Milazzo, on the Tyrrhenian sector ⁽⁶⁹⁾ and in the night between 11 and 12 August all of its remaining units were moved, together with the remains of the XIX Coastal Brigade, to Messina for the ferry to the mainland ⁽⁷⁰⁾.

Took place during the mentioned evacuation movement of Italian troops, was developed against the German XIV Corps convergent offensive, aimed at Messina, the US 7th Army and British 8th Army, so that in the last week of the fighting in Sicily, between 10 and 11 August, they recorded the following episodes.

The famous landing of the US II/30th Inf. at Brolo on the night between 10 and 11 August cut, as we said, the withdrawal of most of the remaining guns of the "Assietta", isolated the 500th Battalion of the XIX Coastal Brigade and together with the contemporary thrust of the 15th Regimental tactical group of the US 3rd Inf. Div. against the 71st Inf. Regiment the 29th Panzergrenadier Div. in the Naso area, led to a retreat of the German northern front along the course of the Fiumara Naso ⁽⁷¹⁾.

The remaining central and southern front, held by the 15th Div. "Sizilien" joined by the "H. Goering" by the "Schmalz" group and by the paratroopers of the 3rd and 4th Regiments, The most important event was the evacuation of Randazzo at 19:00 on the 11th, locations of convergence of the American 9th Inf. Div. and the English 78th Inf. Div. ⁽⁷²⁾.

Along the Ionian coast, however, were reported on the 11th only shelling of British ships against the German rear at Fiumefreddo.

With the fall of Randazzo was broken the "Tonoricci line", which Gen. Hube had just reached only on August 11, so that he, in order to prevent the circumvention of lines

(69) A.U.S.E., folder 1427, "Military Historical Journal of the XVI Corps", p. 192 and p. 194.

(70) A.U.S.E., 2229 folder, phonogram Command tell Messina Piazza -Reggio C. n. 01/183/op of 12 August 1943.

(71.) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: "Daily Bulletin of the German XIV Corps for the day August 11, 1943".

(72) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943 ", p. 35.

interior of its recent deployment, ordered for the night between 12 and 13 a retreat on new front in passage for Fumari, S. Marco, Novara di Sicilia, Francavilla, Castiglione di Sicilia, Linguaglossa and Fiumefreddo ⁽⁷³⁾.

As Gen. Guzzoni left written in a formal report under date of August 12, "the move back provisions was intended to wear down the enemy as much as possible by successive positions and gradually give way to accomplish the evacuation of our forces responded by approving the criterion" ⁽⁷⁴⁾.

The Germans predisposero on the new line of resistance, reached on August 13, amounted to a great many road blocks, checkpoints and mined roadblocks, flowing at the same time to Messina with their heavy materials, ready to be ferried. The front between Furnari and Fiumefreddo was held for the rest of the day of the 13th and all day of the 14th by the 29th Panzergrenadier Div., whose command was located in Barcelona, by the 15th Div. "Sizilien", the paratroopers and the "H. Goering," whose command was located in Taormina ⁽⁷⁵⁾.

On the evening of August 14 armored columns of the American 3rd Inf. Div. overcame German blockades along the Tyrrhenian coast, sending even vanguards to circumvent the barriers by sea and inducing Gen. Hube to provide for the execution of the 15th already preordained contraction of the front on the second intermediate position between Barcelona and St. Teresa of Riva ⁽⁷⁶⁾. With the contraction of the defensive perimeter it was also carried out on August 15 the ferry crossing over the Strait of 15th Div. "Sizilien" ⁽⁷⁷⁾.

Just then on August 15, while, in Madrid Gen. Castellano, sent by Badoglio, met the British ambassador

(73) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, phonogram 6th Army Command n. 17354/op of 17.00 on August 13, 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E. and phonogram Piazza di Messina -Reggio Command n. 01/183/op of 12 August 1943.

(74) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from 21 July to 17 August 1943" day on August 12, p. 36.

(75) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: Annex 814/3: precisely the 6th Army Command on August 14, 1943.

(76) A.U.S.E., folder 2229 "Daily bulletins of the German XIV Corps of 24:00 on August 13 and 24:00 hours of 14 August 1943."

(77) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: marconigram 6th Army Command n. 17401/op of 15 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E. and in the 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Sicily Command from 21 July to 17 August 1943", p. 38.

Hoare, confirming, after the contacts of Ajela and Berio, that if the Allies had landed in the Italian peninsula, the Rome government would be detached from Germany ⁽⁷⁸⁾.

For its part the 8th British Army, made on August 14th the reunion of its two corps north of Etna, and precisely in the area of Linguaglossa-Castiglione di Sicilia, reorganized its ranks. The 50th Inf. Div. passed to XXX Corps, which continued until the last days of the Sicilian campaign with the same 50th Inf. Div., the 51st Highland Div., the 78th Inf. Div., the 231st "Malta" Brigade and the 4th Armoured Brigade. The XIII Army Corps was instead withdrawn from the front to prepare for the crossing of the Strait (operation BAYTOWN) and was reorganized with the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. and the UK 5th Inf. Div. ⁽⁷⁹⁾.

On the Ionian coastal area the troops of Montgomery conquered on August 15 Taormina, following the retreat of the Germans towards Messina, but acting very cautiously, then causing of their "sports" loss in the speed race to the city of the Strait, engaged at a distance with the 7th Army of Patton.

At 04:30 on the 16th then, as we have already said, the British 2nd Commando effected the small landing at M. Marina, but failed, like the US amphibious operations on the Tyrrhenian coast, to cut the line of retreat of the enemy.

In the early hours of August 16, the Americans, who had penetrated into Barcelona with their 7th Inf. Regiment the previous day, made their last landing on the Tyrrhenian coast, by landing the 157th Regimental tactical group of the 45th Inf. Div. at Bivio Salic, the area already, however, occupied by the U.S. 7th Inf. Regt. ⁽⁸⁰⁾.

The move to the protection of the last line of defense Divieto -Moletti was completed at 06:35 on 17 August following the evacuation of German troops from Sicily (Operation LEHRGANG), with ferry

(78) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. V: cit., P. 197-198 and pp. 213-214.*

(79) B.L. MONTGOMERY: *Da El Alamein al fiume Sangro*, op cit., Pp. And HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY 139-140 OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East, vol. V: cit., P. 177.*

(80) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 414-415.

to Calabria in the Command of the XIV Army Corps of Gen. Hube⁽⁸¹⁾.

The last hours of the Sicilian campaign were summarized by Gen. Alexander at the conclusion of his official report published in the "*London Gazette*"⁽⁸²⁾:

"On the night of August 16 the vanguard troops of the American 3rd Division entered Messina. The next morning arrived by the Commandos of XXX Corps. Before the dawn of the 17th, according to a German report, General Hube, the German commander, set sail from a beach north of Messina on the last boat departing the isle of Sicily which had been conquered in 38 days. "

5. THE GERMAN EVACUATION: OPERATION "LEHRGANG "

Germany's biggest concern throughout the Sicilian campaign was to keep an open line of supplies through the Strait of Messina and, eventually, to prevent this waterway being blocked by the enemy with the subsequent trapping of the Axis divisions on the island.

Then to keep an eye on the strait between Sicily and Calabria, from July 13 Gen. Jodl had discussed with Kesselring the appropriate measures and the following day Col. Baade was appointed German commander of the Messina Strait. The tasks of this able officer, already responsible for the organization of the German troops in Sicily, were (83):

- restructuring the Strait defense by installing additional anti-ship and anti-aircraft batteries and with the strengthening of alert measures;
- control of traffic and coordinating ferry services, redeemed mostly by the Germans with excellent "Siebel" landing craft,

(81) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command Sicily from July 21 to August 17, 1943," On August 17, p. 40.

(82) SUPPLEMENT TO THE "LONDON GAZETTE" of February 10, 1948: *La conquista della Sicilia dal 10 luglio al 17 agosto 1943*, Official Report of the General Assembly. H. R. ALEXANDER.

(83) A.U.S.E., folder 2266: "Considerations of the 1943-1944 Italian campaign of Colonel Bogislav von Bonin, Chief of Staff of the German XIV Corps in Sicily." P. 16.

armed with 88 mm. cannons and with quadruple 20 mm. auto cannon. This ferry service was placed under the command of Leut. Commander. von Liebenstein, while the entire command of the German naval forces in the Strait was placed under the command on July 22 of naval Capt. von Kamptz ⁽⁸⁴⁾.

To fulfill his mission Col. Baade, placed under the direct orders of Gen. Hube, who had at his disposal a fortress battalion, two pioneers battalions, the 771st Landing Pioneers Battalion, a Paratroopers Battalion of the 1st Division, part of the 616th Art. Coastal Regiment, a construction company and Flak units of the Luftwaffe. On this last point in the diary of Baade, under date of August 16, it is reminded that the flak artillery at his disposal in the Strait numbered 235 pieces, including 93 on the Sicilian shores and 142 on the Calabrian ⁽⁸⁵⁾.

Also the only two existing modern anti-ship batteries on the island and represented by long range 170 mm cannons were German and more precisely belonged to the 15th Div. "Sizilien". They were transferred to the Calabrian coast and placed in position on either side of Villa S. Giovanni and, while possessing only a small reserve of ammunition, formed until the end of the campaign the most effective protection against enemy naval threats in the Straits ⁽⁸⁶⁾.

With the news of the fall of Mussolini was whipped up in Berlin a considerable concerns about possible Italian armistice and the subsequent trapping of the four German divisions then in Sicily, as Hitler was able to argue to in repeated talks with his generals. Neither declarations of loyalty to the Axis made by all levels of politicians and the Italian military, including Guzzoni, reassured the O.K.W. and in particular Gen. Hube ⁽⁸⁷⁾.

(84) A. Santoni -F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, cit., P. 453 and HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit., P. 44.

(85) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit., P. 165.

(86) A.U.S.E., folder 2266: "Considerations of the 1943-1944 Italian campaign of Colonel Bogislav von Bonin, Chief of Staff of the German XIV Corps in Sicily." Pp. 16-17.

(87) *Ibid*, p. 20.

However arguments Kesselring, Jodl and Donitz, all guided by the need not to give the government of Badoglio any excuse to break the alliance, had the better of the initial intentions of Hitler and Rommel to leave immediately after July 25 not only Sicily, but throughout central and southern Italy until the Pisa-Rimini line.

So it was that the Führer was convinced of the need to extend as long as possible the resistance on the island, even with only the German troops, and in the meantime to implement the preventive purposes of the ALARICO plan, expected as early as May 22 and concerning the transfer into northern Italy the strong Army Group B of Rommel.

Following the above decisions of Hitler, Gen. Hube purposed the well-known plan that tended to slow the enemy advance on Messina and which envisaged a retreat in three phases on the famous "Tortorici line", which was shared by Gen. Ciuzzoni on August 4th and from them communicated to Rome the following day ⁽⁸⁸⁾.

However, since August 3, as we know, he had begun the evacuation of Italian troops from Sicily, while the last units of the 6th Army received permission from Rome to evacuate the island on the morning of the 9th, with momentary exclusion of coastal units of Gen. Bozzoni. That placing solely on the shoulders of the German XIV Corps - in the words of the same Cuzzoni - "the task of continuing the fight to the last, the struggle that the other side was supporting for some time alone" ⁽⁸⁹⁾.

For their part the O.K.W. and Kesselring, despite having advised Hitler to implement a comprehensive and immediate German retreat on the Apennine arc, could not ignore the danger of isolation that the German units ran in Sicily in the case of Italy leaving the conflict. Therefore, on July 27, two days after the fall of Mussolini, Kesselring had warned Gen. Hube to be ready to evacuate XIV Corps from the island "in the event that Italy had abandoned the alliance with Germany" ⁽⁹⁰⁾. It was

(88) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, attachment 805/8 most often mentioned telex of the 6th Army Command n. 17186/op of 5 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(89) A.U.S.E., folder 2229, phonogram 6th Army Command n. 17280/op of 11:30 am on 9 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(90) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 374

then drafted by the command of the XIV Corps in early August an evacuation plan, but still did not foresee any date of implementation. So on August 8 - when the Italian evacuation had already begun for five days - Kesselring said to Hube, on its own initiative and without consulting the OKW, permission to leave the island, while leaving "the choice of the first day of the retreat to the German commander of XIV Corps" ⁽⁹¹⁾.

The O.K.W., faced with a fait accompli, in turn persuaded Hitler to sanction on August 9 the autonomous decision to Kesselring ⁽⁹²⁾. At this point there was still the choice of the start date of the evacuation (Operation LEHRGANG) that it was, as I said, under the command of the German XIV Corps.

On the evening of August 10, Gen. Hube, considering that the Italian Supreme Command had already provided since the morning of the 9th the evacuation of all remaining units of the 6th Army still in Sicily, provisionally excluded only those coastal of Gen. Bozzoni, issued executive order for the transport of his units over the Straits ⁽⁹³⁾.

The German evacuation began the night on August 12, when the first heavy vehicles began to cross the Strait on the landing craft of Lt. Commander von Liebenstein and after had been smashed the last defensive line "of Tortorici."

On the 15th the "Sizilien" Div. reached completely the Calabrian coast, without losing a single man nor a single rifle ⁽⁹⁴⁾. Finally in the night on the 16th the German XIV Corp. constituted the last fighting barrier line between Prohibition and Moleti, sheltered which was completed the evacuation of German troops at 06:35 on the 17 August ⁽⁹⁵⁾.

(91) A.U.S.E., folder 2266: "Considerations of the 1943-1944 Italian campaign of Colonel Bogislav von Bonin, Chief of Staff of the German XIV Corps in Sicily ", p. 26.

(92) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 375 and M. Blumenson: *Sicily: Whose victory?*, Op. cit., p. 132.

(93) *Ibid.*

(94) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B: "Report of the Armed Forces Command of Sicily from July 21 to August 17, 1943", 15 August pg. 38 and folder 2229 phonogram of the 6th Army Command No. 17401 op of 15 August, p. 38 and folder 2229 phonogram of the 6th Army Command No. 17401/op of 15 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(95) AUSE, folder 2229: "Daily Bulletin of the German XIV Corps of 24:00 on August 15: phonogram 6th Army Command No. 17415/op of 17.00 on August 16, 1943 addressed to the SMRE, folder 2124/B above cited report, on August 17th. "

For the evacuation by sea the Germans tried to avoid the normal landing points and Lt. Commander von Liebenstein engraved in operation LEHRGANG great elasticity, changing as much as possible the embarkation stations. In particular were used six boarding points on the Sicilian coast and twelve different routes along the Strait, employing a total of eighty landing craft, twelve special 'Siebel' boats, two gunboats, eleven large rafts of the enginners and 33 smaller vehicles.

Allied air forces tried by all means to counter both the evacuation of Italian troops and the following operation LEHRGANG, employing between 8 and 17 August 1029 well-bombers and 1,883 fighter-bombers, but they ran into a real wall of fire developed by 235 cannons of Baade massed on both sides of the Strait and divided into 123 pieces of 88 and from 90 mm. and 112 of smaller caliber. It was calculated the way that the local anti-aircraft defense was greater than that which came with the City of London ⁽⁹⁶⁾.

Even the anti-ship coastal batteries, including the two famous by 170 mm. long-range, made good guard and the night of August 15 hit in the heart of the Straits the English motor torpedo boat *MTB-665*, sinking with all hands ⁽⁹⁷⁾.

Between the night of the 14th and that of the 16th, a period in which the operation LEHRGANG well and truly took, vessels of Lt. Commander von Liebenstein They made 4,700 crossings.

In what Gen. von Senger called it "a glorious retreat" were evacuated 39,569 German soldiers, including 4,444 wounded, 9,605 vehicles, 47 tanks, 94 pieces of field artillery, 1,100 tons of ammunition, 970 tons of fuel and 15,700 tons of other material ⁽⁹⁸⁾.

Consider the figures already provided in section 3 towards Italian evacuation, the total of the Axis ferried troops on the continent August 3 to 17 and then reached the figure of 102,000 men, with 9,832 vehicles, 139 artillery pieces, 47 tanks, 12 mules and about 18,000 tons of war material.

(96) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit, p, 376.

(97) S.E. MORISON: *History of U.S., Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. IX: cit. Italian translation by the S.M.R.E.

(98) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 334, In the number they do not include 13,500 wounded and sick Germans already evacuated from 15 July.

After completing operation LEHRGANG, the Germans also managed to rescue almost all of their ferries and landing craft. In fact the latter were transferred the evening of 17 August from the Calabrian coast of the Straits to Naples, from where they were re-used with equal success for the evacuation of troops from Sardinia and Corsica. The means of landings to be lost in the transaction of LEHRGANG were, according to German reports, total only thirteen (99).

Happy surprise was expressed by the German Commands for the brilliant success of the entire Italian-German evacuation of Sicily, that had nothing to envy to similar and already famous British operations of Dunkirk and Japanese Guadalcanal, not to mention the contemporary Japanese evacuation of the island of Kiska in the Aleutians, made also in mid-August 1943. The success of the evacuation of Sicily was due, addition to the grounds away enumerated, also to the fact that the Anglo-American Command had not prepared any detailed plan to counter the even predictable island evacuation. This in contrast to what they themselves had done instead in the previous May with operation RETRIBUTION, which prevented the eviction of the Axis troops from Tunisia.

Perhaps he was right then when Gen. Fuller in his book about World War II wrote that the two major naval powers of the world had lost a great opportunity to trap the enemy with swift landings at Catania or Messina, because of the prevalence of the American aviation mindedness over that classic naval origination of the English⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. This error cost him dear enough to the allies, since most of those German troops escaped capture in Sicily would soon gave many troubles to the Anglo-Americans on the beaches of Salerno and the Volturno.

The first congratulations to General Hube, also for helping to evacuate Italian, were those expressed by Gen. Guzzoni on August 16, when it was not yet fully completed

(99) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit., P. 171

(100) H. POND: *Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 331

LEHRGANG the operation. The Commander of the Italian 6th Army expressed himself on this occasion ⁽¹⁰¹⁾:

At a time when we have the end, after 40 days, the terrible battle with evacuation from the island of Sicily, for the difficult circumstances in which it is held, is a magnificent example of such operations, I am pleased to extend to you, your Excellency, my most cordial greeting.

You supported with your valiant troops the hardest fight; their operational capacity, their skills and their value amounted only to the high quality of the Commander of which you gave shining proof.

As Army Commander, I express my gratitude for the generous assistance given with your evacuation transportation of troops and Italian materials.

Please give to your interpreter, the gentlemen General Commanders of Divisions, from your employees of my Command the feelings that we ascribe to our honor to have been under his command.

I express to you, Your Excellency, and the XIV Corps. the warm wishes of victory and glory."

6. STATISTICS AND FIRST COMMENTS

The losses suffered by the contenders in the campaign of Sicily and as ascertained to this day are as follows ⁽¹⁰²⁾.

It should first point out that the combat troops of the Axis in Sicily had risen gradually to 191,931 Italians and 62,500 Germans, to which were added about 60,000 Italians and 5,000 Germans assigned to the Services, for a grand total of almost 320,000 men.

Of them were returned to Calabria, following the evacuation 3 to 17 August, 62,000 Italian and 39 569 German, while 46,000 others, mostly sick or injured, had been withdrawn earlier from the island (32,500 Italian and 13,500 German).

Nearly 172,000 are therefore the dead, the missing and prisoners, according to the following estimates.

(101) A.U.S.E., folder 2229: message from the 6th Army Command n, 17417/op August 16, 1943 addressed to Gen. Hube, commander of German XIV Corps in Sicily.

(102) A.U.S.E., various documentation and B.H. LIDDELL HART *Stona militare della seconda guerra mondiale*, op. cit. p. 627; G.A. SHEPPERD: *The Italian campaign 1943-1945*, op. cit. p. 74. B.L. MONTGOMERY: *Da El Alamein al fiume Sangro*, op. cit., p. 144; E. FALDELLA: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op cit. Pp. 341-342 and S. ATTANASIO: *Sicilia senza Italia, luglio-agosto 1943*, op. cit. pad. 134 note.

The corpses of Italian and German soldiers regularly buried in the island cemeteries were 4,678 and 4,325 respectively, while the Italians prisoners and the missing turned out 152,753 and the Germans prisoners and missing were 10,106. It is known that the total of Axis prisoners were 122,204, of which 5,523 Germans ⁽¹⁰³⁾, and then 116,681 Italian ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾.

The missing were thus 40,655, of which 36,072 Italians and 4,583 Germans, and among them is including an unknown number of dead buried in mass graves, or remained on the field.

According to Allied figures, the Italian-German air losses between the preparatory phase and the conclusion of the Sicilian campaign amounted to 1,850 aircraft, including destroyed, either on the ground or captured. Just the wrecks of Axis aircraft counted on the island by the allies were 1,421 ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾. From the data available to us, we know that the only Italian aircraft lost in combat, which exclude those destroyed on the ground or captured by the enemy, were 126 ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾.

The Allies also captured or destroyed 167 of the 214 German tanks gradually deployed on the island, the hundred available Italian tanks, 359 pieces of field artillery, all the fixed artillery and more than 3,500 vehicles.

For their part, the Allied ground forces reported around 4,299 dead and 13,083 wounded, divided into 2,237 dead and 5,946 wounded and 2,062 dead Americans and 7,137 British casualties. Beyond that the Americans and the British had 598 prisoners among the 2,644 prisoners and missing. Many were later cases of malaria, that even exceeded the total number of those killed in combat, having been 9,892 in the US camp and 11,590 in the UK ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾.

The US Navy suffered 546 dead and 484 wounded, while the Royal Navy counted in its ranks 314 people dead and 411 injured. The loss of life of the R.A.F. which have been reported amount to 345 dead

(103) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op cit p . 419 and S.E. MORISON: *History of U.S., Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. IX: cit. Italian translation by the S.M.E. p. 354.

(104) It is recalled that in the battle of Stalingrad German prisoners were in total 92,000

(105) D. RICHARDS -H.G. SAUNDERS: *Royal Air Force 1939-1945*, vol. II cit., Italian translation by the S.M.E. p. 495

(106) G. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II, cit., Pp. 560-563.

(107) G.A. Shepperd: *The Italian campaign 1943-1945*, op. cit., p. 74.

or missing and 391 wounded, while the U.S.A.A.F. had 28 dead, 88 missing and 40 injured.

About 400 were the total aircraft destroyed in the Anglo-American camp, while the two Allied Navies lost during Operation HUSKY A total of 85,000 tons of shipping, including that sank in the Atlantic on the way to the Mediterranean and Sicily. Instead, they were merely the result of crude propaganda the figures of 516,000 and even 740,000 tons of enemy shipping self-credited by the air forces of the Axis ⁽⁸¹⁾.

To give an evaluative meaning to the above figures, and finally it must be recalled that when the planning of HUSKY the Anglo-Americans, fearing a air-sea contrast much more intense than that experienced then, they had even predicted to lose half of the ships and amphibious means assigned to landing in Sicily ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾.

* * *

The fall of Sicily was accompanied by criticism and discussions, which continue to this day, do not allow us to remain deaf and insensitive.

Especially hot was the controversy over the general poor moral tenor of some units and the citizenship, which ended up involving the credibility of the entire military structure of the period and the good name of the Sicilian people.

In our opinion, while knowing that incidents of desertion and defeatism may have occurred in other armies and in other countries at war, you can not continue to remain silent that cases of loosening of disciplinary constraints and sense of duty were in Sicily more numerous relevant legal requirements. This was mainly determined in the military by the catastrophic news on the war front and on the inside, disseminated and artfully amplified by the skilful enemy propaganda, and by the flattering propositions addressed by any means from the Anglo-Americans to the Italian military urging them to desert, who were more readily accepted by those who it had at their fingertips

(108) T. DORLING (aka Taffrail): *Mediterraneo occidentale 1942-1945*, op. Cit., P. 113 and A.U.S.E., folder 1502, Annex 777: "Notes concerning the meeting in Plazzo Venezia of 15 July 1943", p. 6

(109) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit., P. 194.

a home to hide. Even more important was the finding of outdated weapons impotence against a more advanced attacking technology and above all, to hear the testimonies of most part, the subjection humiliating to an enemy air-naval dominance unchallenged and unpunished.

As for the behavior of the population, one can not forget that it most of all suffered at that time the harsh consequences of destructive and often apocalyptic air strikes, the almost complete blocking of supplies from the mainland, lack sometimes absolute necessities, the difficulties in internal communications, anxiety about the fate of their loved ones on the firing line, the action of the enemy's propaganda and representatives of separatism.

To this it was added, and finally superimposed a sense of moral demobilization and material, both among the soldiers in and the civilian population, after the fall of fascism, that the new Badoglio government certainly not evaluated enough and put the pin on the firm belief that the war was now lost to Italy and then next was the end of fighting and suffering,

In this regard, it seems necessary to consider the two reports below, more than anything else, may clarify the causes, even psychological, of unfortunate episodes. The first report was sent by the Comando Supremo to Badoglio on 31 August 1943, under the item 'morale', he expressed in the following truth much wider appreciation ⁽¹¹⁰⁾:

"The morale of the troops, already not too bright because of the military events, has been recently undermined by these various circumstances.

1) *Belief that the government change automatically bring peace.*

Initially, as happened to all the citizens, the soldiers have unconsciously welcomed the belief that the war was over. Subsequently the ranks - at least in the mobilized units - has recovered, not as the mass of the official complement of young people who represent the poorer part of our placement.

2) *Exaltation of the behavior of the Sicilian population.*

The news about the behavior proud and patriotic far of certain fractions of the Sicilian people, and bring the veterans units from Sicily

(110) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/D "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", the Supreme Command report to the Head of the Government No. 16475/op of 31 August 1943.

have spread to all other units. It is also public knowledge that some units consist of Sicilian elements are disposed before the contact with the enemy (among other things an entire M.V.S.N. battalion, commander at the head).

This contrasts sharply with the public glorification of that population, and while the element has caught perfectly understood the high need for international and national character which led to silence the actual behavior of the Sicilians, the rank and file, especially one that has fought hard on the island, it is not able to appreciate these needs and draws the conclusion that it is not worth to do their duty, if he is praised those who does not do it.

3) *Exaltation of the behavior of the working masses; and dealing with them issues exorbitant from their work.*

The working masses, after the first excesses promptly stifled by the Military Authority, have maintained an attitude that has seriously harmed the already insufficient war production.

The political and military authorities have been in contact with such masses, carried out in meetings, are made manifest desires that go beyond the ambit of the working-natured interest, they have been extended to the national and international field,

Among other things, therefore, it was discussed in the presence of a minister, the issue of the war,

The workers' demands have rapidly spread and the press also praised the "spirit of discipline" of the masses and expressed towards them "admiration"

The discovery of such facts is deadly in regard to the morale of the troops. The soldier, in fact, far from the family and his interests, unlicensed, poorly paid and that is never praised for his discipline, considered natural phenomenon, can only draw conclusions unfortunately negative, when considering that the worker, He stayed home and largely paid for, can give up work, also discuss military issues, being heard, and then publicly praised for his discipline.

The above is at this moment the greatest danger for the Armed Forces and could lead, as has happened elsewhere in the past to "workers and soldiers councils."

Apart from the military side, there is no doubt that news like the ones mentioned not only increase the mistrust from the Germanic side, consolidating more and more in this his intention to "take care" and check all of our vital activities.

I felt compelled to represent the situation, explaining the elements that materialize.

The Armed Forces, by means of the healthiest part of the cadres, are taking effective action of propaganda. However, it is appropriate, and will formulate a proposal, that such action is not frustrated by similar findings to those disclosed above, and that the Ministry of Popular Culture the press guidelines so you take on a "tone" adequate to the difficult situation today, "tone" that is far from having, and that allows to keep up the morale of the country, that is to say, the morale of the Armed Forces,

the only ones that can resist the disintegrating forces of work and discipline.

Each exaltation of discipline of the working class, just as it gives evidence to the contrary, must cease for the already known effects on the Armed Forces. CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL- signed Ambrosio... "

The second report, which covered hot topics related more particularly to the Sicilian campaign, it was prepared by the Ministerial Committee for the questioning the officers returning from captivity and sent to the Cabinet of the Minister of War dated 24 March 1944⁽¹¹¹⁾.

After reporting new details on the yield of the 207th and the 208th Coastal Div., and on the failure to defend Palermo to the bitter end, they were specified responsibility of local commands and lack of "reactive measures" by superior commands.

They were then examined individual and collective cases of "small sense of duty" that occurred at the depot of the 54th Art. Regiment at Cerda on July 20, at the 304th Coastal Battalion in Palermo on July 22, in the Torre S. Cataldo stronghold and Ponella Misilbesi on July 21 and finally in the military hospital shortly before the fall of Palermo city into enemy hands.

Not so lacked emphasize, by contrast, some episodes of value and finally was evaluated very strictly the attitude of the Sicilian population. They were reported at about numerous cases of theft and looting, as well as hostile acts of citizenship towards the Italian military, that will not be possible to report in detail.

Following the influx of reports of this kind, in November 1945 the Ministry suggested to the Commission for granting rewards to the value of "look with just severity criteria" the day proposed rewards for the participants in the Sicilian campaign⁽¹¹²⁾.

In addressing this matter can not be forgotten that on 10 and 23 October 1943 new accusations of incompetence and even "treason" were addressed to Gen. Guzzoni usually from Farinacci in the newspaper "Fascist regime"⁽¹¹³⁾. The General ex- Commander of

(111) A.U.S.E., folder 2124/B, the 'Findings' file, report no. 354 of 24 March 1944 having as its object "the serious acts that occurred during the invasion of Sicily by the Anglo-American allies."

(112) E. FALDELLA: *Lo sbarco e la difesa della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 286.

(113) G. ZINGALI: *L'invasione della Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 128-129.

Armed Forces of Sicily, who was then in northern Italy, he was actually arrested by Fascist police on 26 October and released in mid-November only after the energetic personal intervention of Field Marshal Kesselring and Gen. von Senger, who also appeared in the Italian press dated November 21 a note of complete exoneration of Guzzoni.

In this latter respect Gen. von Senger recalled in his memoirs ⁽¹¹⁴⁾:

"Even after the fall of Mussolini and while in Rome was preparing the detachment from the ally, at least the command of the 6th Italian Army in Sicily continued to cooperate loyally with the Germans, because those were the orders. Later, when the Fascist Republican Government established by the Germans had wanted to execute Gen. Guzzoni as a traitor, I was able to confirm, without being contradicted, the loyal attitude of this officer against the Axis Sicily".

From the Anglo-American side comments immediately after the victorious conclusion of the Sicilian campaign were marked with proud satisfaction, as evidenced by the message that August 17, 1943 of Gen. Alexander sent to Churchill ⁽¹¹⁵⁾. It was pointed out that a total of 13 Anglo-American divisions gradually deployed on an island of more than 25,000 square kilometers had prevailed in only 38 days, on an equal number of Italian and German divisions. In this regard, however, it was not considered that the ranks were very weak including six Italian coastal divisions and it was silent on the considerable imbalance in the number of effectives, in mobility and firepower between individual Allied divisions and those of the Italian-German line.

Even earlier, ie at the end of the first phase of the invasion of Sicily, Gen. Alexander had expressed a categorical and not very chivalrous judgment, that sounded ⁽¹¹⁶⁾:

"The Italian coastal divisions, whose ability to fight had never been judged very high, disintegrated almost without firing a single shot, and even the operating divisions, encountered later,

(114) F.M. SENGER und ETIERLIN: *Combattere senza paura e senza speranza*, op. cit., p. 256

(115) W. CHURCHILL: *The Second World War*, Vol IX cited. p. 52.53

(116) B.H. LIDDELL HART: *Stona militare della seconda guerra mondiale*, op. cit. p. 622.

scattered like leaves in the wind. They were frequent cases of surrender en masse. "

Only in rare cases, the Anglo-American official reports have tried to look for the causes of the repeatedly denounced poor militancy of the Italian units. It is one of the few examples the report of the Allied Information Services prepared during the Sicilian Campaign on 27 July 1943 and which is expressed as follows ⁽¹¹⁷⁾:

"For most of the Italian units from the campaign, they have not shown a level of moral determination and combative much higher than that of coastal formations, whose capacity was so woefully low. A clear fatigue toward war and a feeling of distrust about the situation in Italy, however, were the factors obviously more powerful to influence and penetrate deep into the interior of the Army from the campaign, with the result that a sense of inferiority and futility destroyed his ardor and his morality" ⁽¹¹⁸⁾.

(117) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 270.

(118) Anglo-American analysis of strictly military teachings of the Sicilian countryside is included in P.R.O. File WO. 204, folder 445: *Sicilian operations: Commander in Chief draft despatch* and folder 465: *Sicilian campaign: comments and concurrences*. The real operating reports on various phases of operation HUSKY from July 6 to August 22, 1943, including thus the antecedents and consequences, are stored in File WO 204, folder 4259 "HUSKY" orders and folder 4321: *Operation "Husky": situation reports*.

CHAPTER XIII

ENGLISH LANDING IN CALABRIA

1. THE ALLIES PLANS FOR A LANDING ON THE CONTINENT AND FORECAST OF THE AXIS FORCES

Since the inter-allied conference in Algiers, held between May 29 and June 3, 1943 had been agreed, on Churchill's pressure, that if Sicily had fallen into Anglo-American hand by the middle of August - as indeed happened - the invasion of Calabria would be considered as an integral and a corollary of the same operation HUSKY. So on July 13, taking additional confidence on the performance of the first military operations in Sicily, Churchill ordered that the Committee of Chiefs of Staff in London to even prepare a plan (called on July 19 AVALANCHE) for "a landing on the western coast of Italy, having as objective the port of Naples and then advancing on Rome" ⁽¹⁾.

July 18, 1943, only eight days after the beginning of the invasion of Sicily, Gen. Eisenhower examined at a meeting between the Allied military leaders the various working hypotheses drawn up until then as a continuation of HUSKY and that, with the exception of AVALANCHE still in gestation, were the following:

- operation BUTTRESS, on landing at Gioia Tauro by the British X Army Corps;
- operation GOBLET, to be launched a month after BUTTRESS in the Crotona area with the British V Army Corps;
- operation BAYTOWN, on the direct passage of the Strait of Messina to be made with part of the 8th Army of Gen. Montgomery already engaged in Sicily;

(1) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit., P. 196.

- operation MUSKET, a landing of the US 5th of Army Gen. Clark on the heel of the peninsula;
- operations BRIMSTONE and FIREBRAND one concerning the invasion of Sardinia and Corsica by French troops of Gen. Giraud.

The first decision was to approve these last two operations of the "free" French and the English BAYTOWN and American MUSKET and consider operation GOBLET as a subsidiary, rather canceling BUTTRESS for lack of sufficient amphibious ships.

Supervening the fall of Mussolini, Gen. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the US Army, expressed his desire to do away with the Mediterranean and then to focus directly on the gulf of Naples, yielding to British pressure taken predominantly in a previous joint meeting of 23 July for a requested landing in the Gulf of Salerno that realized operation AVALANCHE. Churchill grabbed at the chance and he put that plan, now completed in London, in the immediate operating assumptions ⁽²⁾.

At this point it was necessary to resize the previous projects, canceling also the US operation MUSKET, so that on August 16, the day before the end of the Sicilian campaign, Gen. Eisenhower could finalizing the new plans, which included in succession the following two main operations:

- BAYTOWN, To be launched against the Calabrian coast of the Messina Strait between the 1st and 4 September by the English XIII Army Corps;
- AVALANCHE, To be implemented in the Gulf of Salerno a week after operation BAYTOWN, by the US 5th Army of Gen. Clark.

Operation GOBLET was being held pending, while the British X Corps of General McCreery, set aside for BUTTRESS, it would be held ready to intervene also in Calabria or in support of AVALANCHE, depending on the need of the hour.

As for the execution of BAYTOWN - the first amphibious operation in order of time, and one that affects our study - was taken by Gen. Montgomery all

(2) W. CHURCHILL: *La seconda guerra mondiale*, Vol IX cited. pp .. 50-51.

the precautions, although the conclusion of the period of negotiations for an armistice between the Allies and the Badoglio government. In particular they were launched by the British in late August some exploratory actions on the Calabrian coast to test the responsiveness of the Italian defenses in the area of the future invasion of the European continent.

So during the night between 27 and 28 August a British unit landed in Bova Marina and found the town deserted, then coming to know from a prisoner that the population had fled to the mountains and that the Italian military tended to defect and join the civilians⁽³⁾.

These defections were in fact also reported by Gen. Arisio, commander of the 7th Army, when he called on 26 August to his Corp commanders saying he was aware that "some subordinate units does not prove that moral firmness that is now required" and ordered the creation of special groups of proven faith "to reduce the rebellious reason, recalcitrant and cowardliness" ⁽⁴⁾.

Meanwhile not all British reconnaissance patrols had returned back from their fact-finding missions on the Calabrian ground and what troubled Montgomery, causing him to prepare BAYTOWN as if to meet a strong resistance. This lack of confidence in the Italian real intentions in the days immediately preceding the signing of the armistice of Cassibile, combined with the awareness of the presence in Calabria of two German divisions and the refusal of the Allied Committee of Chiefs of Staff to grant the 8th Army the required number of amphibious vehicles, prevented him from launching the operation for the first of four days provided generally by the plan and did set a date for the night between 2 and 3 September ⁽⁵⁾.

Not being able to realize, for shortage of transport ships, a landing of larger size, Montgomery renounced the desired contribution of the infantry of his XXX Corps, but the artillery of

(3) B.L. MONTGOMERY: *Da El Alamein al fiume Sangro*, op. cit., p. 156.

(4) A.U.S.E., folder 2003, "Historical Journal of the 7th Military Army", attachment 244, Tele of the 7th Army Command No. 1/4902 of 26 August 1943.

(5) The two German divisions in Calabria were the 26th, with only two Panzergrenadier regiments, and the already famous 29th with three regiments, who had fought diffuse in the second part of the Sicilian campaign. Both these divisions belonged now to the LXXVI Army Corps of Gen. Herr, inserted in turn in the 10th Army of Gen. von Vieinghoff.

this last great massing of units that would be joining the batteries from the XIII Corps. (1st Canadian Inf. Div. and 5th British Inf. Div.) in charge of the landing between Reggio Calabria and Catona, south of Villa S. Giovanni.

It is therefore achieved by the British a concentration well 630 pieces on the Sicilian side of the Strait, including 48 pieces of 155 mm. provided by the US 7th Army. From the sea they gave their support another 120 guns of the battleships *Nelson* and *Rodney*, the monitor *Erebus*, *Abercrombie* and *Roberts*, all told three cruisers, five destroyers, four gunboats and twelve landing craft equipped with artillery and rockets.

The aircraft that the Allies had then concentrated around the Mediterranean, and that they should therefore be used for all liabilities of the sector, were 3,648, including transport.

* * *

The crossing from the other side of the Messina Strait was considered by Italian commands of dubious implementation, especially because in Rome they continued to give the enemy the usual infinite availability of resources and therefore the ability to launch the most ambitious and large amphibious actions, all in the usual perspective that overestimated the Mediterranean area and in the Anglo-American camp was instead shared only by Churchill.

Furthermore, the old preconception that the conquest of Sardinia constituted for the enemy a must - which however it never was - it became even in its turn the main island of anxieties of the Supreme Command, so that at that time were made in Sardinian waters new defensive minefields.

It's no wonder that on August 17, day of the loss of Sicily, Gen. Ambrosio, in a circular directed to the three General Staffs of the Armed Forces, and which we will return later, defined particularly the threat to Sardinia while not excluding attacks against unspecified central-northern Italy with the use of aircraft carriers ⁽⁶⁾. Also on August 18 the S.I.M. summarized

(6) A.U.S.E. Folder 1504/C: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", the circular of the Supreme Command No. 15981/op of 17 August 1943: "Guidelines for the defense of the Motherland"

the "appreciation of the situation," performed by the famous Committee for Strategic Reconnaissance ⁽⁷⁾:

"At present it can be concluded:

- a) The preparation of the means (enemies, CV) for a new operating cycle is basically complete, including the influx of troops into the boarding area ⁽⁸⁾.
- b) With the current locations the most likely direction is Sardinia-Corsica.
- c) The operation is not to be considered, however, as absolutely imminent. "

Ten days later, on the evening of August 28, a little more than five days from the passage of the Straits by the British, and when it was obvious the lack of warning signs of an invasion of Sardinia and Corsica, concerns over these two islands Rome finally abandoned, to be replaced by the generic provision of imprecise "contemporary action against southern Italy from the Tyrrhenian and the Ionian" ⁽⁹⁾.

However, only the day before operation BAYTOWN, that is, September 10, the S.I.M. He felt that the enemy was ready for a "action on the Calabrian coast of the Ionian Sea", but at this time it was not better localized ⁽¹⁰⁾.

* * *

The Italian defense forces in Calabria had gathered in the XXXI Corps, part of the 7th Army of Gen. Arisio which also included the XIX. Corps in Campania and IX Corps. in Puglia and Basilicata.

The XXXI 'Army Corps of Gen. Mercalli with headquarters in Soveria Mannelli, had thr: the 211th Coastal Div., who with the Reggio Naval Base covered the ends of Calabria between Cape Vaticano on the Tyrrhenian and St. Andrea Apostolo on the Ionian Sea; the 212th Coastal Div., which covered on both sides of the Catanzaro defilade in the gulfs of St. Eufemia and Squillace; the 214th Coastal Div.,

(7) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/C: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", the tele of the S.I.M. n. 42315/op of 19:10 hours of August 18, 1943.

(8) The main area of embarkation of the allied troops had been identified as in the area of Bisena.

(9) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/C: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command" tele by S.I.M. n. 42383/op of 18:50 hours of August 28, 1943.

(10) A.U.S.E., folder 3050 tele of S.I.M. .. n. 42405/op of September 1, 1943.

deployed on the Ionian Sea along the Sila Peninsula, and the 277th Coastal Div., which supplemented the coastal defense of the remaining Ionian area of Calabria as well as the Tyrrhenian between the Gulf of St. Euphemia and the border with Basilicata.

The maneuvering units in the Calabrian territory of the XXXI Corps were represented by the German 29th Panzergrenadier Div., deployed in the Aspromonte and the area Rosarno - Polisrena - Siderno, by the "Mantova" Inf. Div., allocated around Tauranga - Locri and the defilade of Catanzaro, and finally by the German 26th Panzergrenadier Div, though with only two regiments of armored grenadiers and divided between the defilade of Catanzaro and Castrovillari. The only Italian contingent of the XXXI Corps. amounted to 2,090 officers, 2,537 NCOs and 46,582 enlisted men ⁽¹¹⁾.

The Axis air forces which could be used in late August against possible landings in southern Italy amounted to 1,561 aircraft, excluding transport and those assigned to flight schools. In particular on the peninsula fields, Sardinia, Corsica and Provence were deployed 684 German and 877 Italian aircraft, which were added to five hundred present in Greece, Crete and the Balkans. Of course not all aircraft could be simultaneously used in combat, for various reasons, as indeed was and as indeed it was and is inevitable in all air forces of the world⁽¹²⁾.

In addition to a number of German light ships (torpedo boats, landing craft and armed motor minesweepers) and 15 German U -boote still present in the Mediterranean at the end of August the Italian R. Navy fielded on 1 September the following ship, including ready and in the yards ⁽¹³⁾:

- 5 battleships ready and 2 in the yards;
- 7 Cruisers ready and 6 in the yards;
- 13 destroyers ready and 20 in the yards;
- 34 torpedo boats ready and 22 in the yards;
- 18 corvettes ready and 10 in the yards;
- 56 M.T.B, M.A.S. and V.A.S. ready and 51 in the yards;
- 35 submarines ready and 20 in the yards.

(11) A.U.S.E., folder 2003: "Historical Military Diary of the 7th Army", annexed 112 "Force of subordinate units to date. July 31, 1943".

(12) G. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II, cited above. p. 566-567 and A. SANTONI -F. MATTESINI: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, op. cit., p. 467-468.

(13) A.U.S.E., folder 3050 "Comando Supremo", The battle fleet of the Royal Navy; on September 1, 1943, showing the subdivision of the naval forces and ships ready and in the yards.

In comparison with the situation of the Royal Navy reported on 1 August and reproduced in Chapter XI "in paragraph 1, the availability of Italian ships had increased, especially in regard of ready ships.

2. THE DEFENSIVE PROBLEMS OF THE ITALIAN 7th ARMY

The state of readiness of the 7th Army, whose command was officially passed on 1 August by Gen. Adalberto of Savoia-Genoa to Gen. Mario Arisio, former commander of the XII Corps in Sicily, it is illustrated in a direct report to the same Arisio to the S.M.R.E. On August 8, after the initial inspection he conducted among the subordinate unit ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Bluntly Gen. Arisio claimed to have found on that date "completely inadequate" defense of Calabria, because of the limited number of troops, their poor quality characteristics, the deleterious regional recruitment system, the absence of real strongholds and anti-tank barriers and finally the amplitude of the sea borders.

The newly appointed commander of the 7th Army, therefore suggested to constitute "a few large advanced strongholds in the most sensitive parts of the coast, where originate the main communications, to establish some internal barrier by exploiting the natural randomness of the mountainous terrain, to rush with large mobile units where the landing will occur, to cling to the ground to prevent the opponent to proceed and counter-attack".

To carry out this program Gen. Arisio but asked to have in Calabria at least three mobile divisions, something that was later granted with the arrival of the German 26th and 29th Div., who, alongside the existing "Mantova" Inf. Div. ⁽¹⁵⁾.

(14) A.U.S.E. 2003 folder: "Historical Military Diary of the 7th Army" attachment 143: 2/6799 sheet of 8 August 1943 the 7th Army command to the S.M.R.E. The most important positions in the 7th Army Command were held by the following officials: Gen. Pelligra, Chief of Staff, Col. Faccin, Deputy Chief of Staff, Col. Micaletti, Chief Information Office Lt. Col. Lella, Chief of Operations Office, Col. Bianchi, Chief of the Judiciary Office, Col. Pignatelli, Personnel Office and Secretariat, Gen. Guccione artillery commander, Gen. Crivaro commander of Engineers. See folder 2003, attachment 119 and folder 2004, attachment 110.

(15) The 26th and the 29th Panzergrenadier Div. were officially located in Calabria on August 17, the day of the fall of Sicily, See. A.U.S.E., folder 02003, attachment 184 tele cipher 7th Army Command n. 2/7231 of 17 August addressed to S.M.R.E.

Following these surveys, on 13 August the 7th Army Command addressed the Commands of the three subordinate corps, the following guidelines for the defensive organization of the territory ⁽¹⁶⁾:

- 1) decrease the number of small coastal strongholds creating new and more on the likely landing directions and of enemy penetration;
- 2) block the access routes to the interior with adequate strongholds reinforced by loose artillery, arranged at that time along the coast;
- 3) create the strongholds in areas inaccessible to tanks, or surround them with anti-tank ditches and fences;
- 4) make the most of the organizing the villages to defend the perimeter and not holding more or less distant from the town;
- 5) skillfully exploit the terrain conditions;
- 6) do not hesitate to relieve the coastal defense, "reducing it in some sections even single supervisory line", to the benefit of greater consistency of the strongholds;
- 7) avoid to capture the troops in crisis of movement, as it - we add -it happened frequently in Sicily.

Meanwhile arose also in the area of the 7th Army problems with command and dependencies concerning the Italian and German units. A dispatch from the command of the 7th Army on August 18 we know that this issue was resolved for the moment giving wherever the command of the Italian - German troops to the officer Italian or German locally most senior in rank, including fixed and mobile defense of the airports. In this regard it was recommended not to tense up on matters of detail and of having as ultimate goal the maximum defensive efficiency ⁽¹⁷⁾. The latter, moreover, was greatly enhanced on that day, with the incorporation in the 7th Army of those artillery groups originally intended for Sicily and which were redistributed according to the following criteria ⁽¹⁸⁾.

(16) A.U.S.E., folder 2003, accompanying circular 162: of the 7th Army Command No. 2/7025 of 13 August 1943.

(17) A.U.S.E., folder 2003, accompanying 195: telegram message in the clear from the 7th Army Command No. 2/7282 of 18 August 1943.

(18) A.U.S.E. folder 2003: Annex 180: telex dated 7th Army Command No. 2/7226 of 19:15 of 17 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

- XLIII Group 105/14, parked at Eboli: three batteries from the XIX Corps and two batteries XXXI Corps in Calabria.
- III Group 75/18 parked in Gioia Tauro and batteries 361st, 362nd and 363rd of the same caliber parked in Cosenza also assigned to the XXXI Corps.
- XII and XIV group 105/28, parked in Policastro Diamante and at Palla, passed directly to the Army Command.

Also on the last day of August also CLII Art. group 149/19 as well as a group of CLI battery, parked in Calabria, were assigned to the XXXI Corps of Gen. Mercalli ⁽¹⁹⁾.

The selected operational criteria of the 7th Army were reported by Gen. Arisio to the S.M.R.E. on August 26, with a long report, from which we derive the following concepts for the defense of Calabria ⁽²⁰⁾:

- prevent with coastal troops the enemy from setting foot in the peninsula;
- employ the German and Italian mobile units against the eventually enemy landed, in order to drive him back into the sea, or at least to wear it down and secure it pending the arrival of reinforcements:
- effect the withdraw, in the case of the previous failure, on the connector of Pollino or on that of Taranto-Brindisi, safeguarding in any way the Taranto Base, where resided a part of the fleet.

On this occasion Gen. Arisio asked the S.M.R.E. by clarifying to whom belonged the greater coordination of the action of the Italian contingent and the 10th Army of Gen. Vietinghoff, which in turn deployed in the territories of the 7th Army the XVI and LXXVI Corps, total strength of six divisions ⁽²¹⁾.

More importantly, Gen. Arisio asked the assignment of another 7 divisions and 4 groups of Army artillery, with which raise the general defensive capabilities and the moral level of the local troops, "polluted by recent contacts with veterans

(19) A.U.S.E. folder 2003, attachment 271: phonogram of the 7th Army Command No. 4/5388/OM of 31 August 1943 addressed to the Army Command.

(20) *Ibid*, Annex 247: Report of the 7th Army Command No. 2/7699 of 26 August 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(21) The German XVI Corp., was moved to Campania and included the divisions "H. Goering", 15th and 16th, while the LXXVI Corps. of Gen. Herr, as we have said, was stationed in Calabria with 26th and 29th Panzergrenadier Div. Finally, the German 1st Parachute Division was in Puglia and Basilicara.

from Sicily and shock from stories heard about the unfortunate war of the island" ⁽²²⁾.

A final problem for the command of the 7th Army was represented by the protection of the network of connections, undermined by the continuous enemy air raids. In general it can be said that the wired connections with subordinate Army Corps Commands functioned satisfactorily, being enough to reconnecting the lines interrupted by bombs. It was not always reliable however the radio link with the Command of the XXXI Corps in August after the destruction of the fixed radio station of Catanzaro, which made pour all traffic on field stations in poor working order. For its part, the connection by means of pigeons worked very irregularly, mainly because of the difficulties of transport of the animals ⁽²³⁾.

3. THE PROGRESSIVE DETERIORATION OF ITALIAN-GERMAN RELATIONS UNTIL THE ARMISTICE OF CASSIBILE

We have already had occasion to mention here and there with more and more obvious symptoms of the German wariness about the true Italian will to lead to the end a war that was becoming clear-cut against the Axis in the Mediterranean basin.

In this regard, in May 1943, since the time of the fall of Tunisia, Dr. Goebbels, as an expert on the psychology of the masses, had predicted that the British and Americans would take advantage of the acquired domain across North Africa to unleash a war of nerves against the already shaky Italian combative energies. In what the head of Nazi propaganda had been easy prophet, it is long been clear, not only to the Anglo-Americans, that Italy was the vulnerable "soft underbelly of the Axis military and moral sense" ⁽²⁴⁾.

After an extensive series of Italian-British contacts at various levels, initiated actually at the end of 1940, ie prior to the rush of the

(22) A.U.S.E. folder 2003, attachment 247 mentioned above.

(23) A.U.S.E., folder 2004: "Report on the Activities of the 7th Army from September 1 to October 31, 1943", p. 2.

(24) If this known Churchillian definition could then be historically acceptable in 1949 it was not as acidic as Montgomery's statement concerning "a spaghetti ring" as the only bulwark of the southern front of N.A.T.O.: See. C. DE RISIO: *Navi di ferro, teste di legno: la Marina italiana ieri e oggi*, op. cit., p. 51.

Germans into the Mediterranean, it has nowadays evidence that the final phase of the approaches between the Allies and dissidents belonging to General Badoglio and Caviglia began in Bern in May 1942 and not at the beginning of 1943, as previously thought ⁽²⁵⁾.

Churchill still kept the idea of not making any concrete promise to the Italian dissidents of the envisaged first invasion of Sicily and the demonstration of this was made up of the negative opinion given. January 18, 1943 by the British War Cabinet to the secret mission proposal by Gen. Pesenti to Cyrenaica ⁽²⁶⁾.

The contacts with the Allies were not interrupted, however, as other initiatives were under way in Madrid, through Generalissimo Franco, in Lisbon, for about Ambassador Frasoni moved there from Stockholm, in Geneva through the Consul added Marieni and finally through the Vatican and Princess Maria Josè, with a web of uncoordinated proposals but significant, for which detailed analysis please refer to elsewhere ⁽²⁷⁾.

Everything Berlin seemed to be apparently unaware if so would you give full credit to the optimistic reports of the Ambassador in Rome von Mackensen, but also to those of Kesselring and von Rintelen. In truth alarming warnings coming from other sources, they were from time to time landing on the work table of Hitler, especially after replacing Cavallero with Ambrosio as the Italian Supreme Command on January 30, 1943 ⁽²⁸⁾.

The only element of trust which in those days seemed to reassure the Führer was formed by Mussolini's position, reputed still solid in Berlin, while the greater concern for Hitler and his closest associates had

(25) P.R.O. File Fa 371, Folder 37262: *Situation in Italy*, memo summarizing *PLANS/425/588* of the War Office on January 7, 1943.

(26) P.R.O. background RREM 3, folder 365/2: *Psychological warfare in connection with operation "Husky"* and 242/9 folder: W.M (43) *9th Conclusion, confidential annex*, 18th January, 1943, 11:30 a.m.

(27) See. for example A. VARSORI: *Italy, Britain and the problem of a separate peace during the second world war*, in "The Journal of Italian history" year 1978, n. 3; M TOSCANO "New Anthology", September and October 1964: M TOSCANO: *Sondaggi italiani per uscire dal conflitto prima della caduta di Mussolini*, in the "Clio", April 1965, and; M TOSCANO: *Gli archivi militari americani e gli armistizi italiani del 1943*, in "New Anthology", in January 1966.

(28) G. CIANO: *Diario 1937-1943*, Milano 1980, p. 694.

represented by the attitude of the Royal Court and the same Comando Supremo. Therefore on May 22, 1943 was approved, as is known, the ALARICO plan, prepared by Gen. Keitel on behalf of Hitler and on the move in northern Italy of large ground forces under Rommel's orders, in order to take control of the points key of the peninsula at the appropriate time, as well as plan CONSTANTINE, intended to replace in the Balkans, for the same purpose, the local Italian garrison divisions with German troops ⁽²⁹⁾.

But the events that provoked the Germans the feeling of an imminent Italian collapse were those concerning the Sicilian campaign. They are known to regard the harsh accusations made by Adm. Donitz to Supermarina on July 17, 1943 about non-use of the Italian fleet in defense of the national territory, during which the Commander in Chief of the German Navy went so far as to speculate the German occupation of the main naval bases of the peninsula, to avoid that "even Taranto and Naples would not have the same end as at Augusta"⁽³⁰⁾.

The dissatisfaction expressed to Berlin from Donitz and by Goering himself about the trend of said operations in Sicily and numerous arguments to Hitler for his long indictment of the Mediterranean ally pronounced during the famous conference of Feltre.

Despite this background, the coup of 25 July and the arrest of Mussolini formed temporally surprise to Berlin. On the same night Hitler called a meeting of his military chiefs and threatened harsh reprisals against the House of Savoy, Badoglio and even the Pope. So the next day the Führer summed the new situation:

"Of one thing we can be sure: by those traitors who are, say, obviously, that they intended to continue fighting on our side. This in other words. In reality they merely stab in the back. But we will do the same game, in the sense that we will continue to give them the rope to fall suddenly upon them and outwit the whole band "(31)

(29) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 50.

(30) Severe judgments on the Italian Armed Forces in general have also been published in the memoirs of the same in the German Grand Admiral K. Doenitz: *Dieci anni e venti giorni*, Milano 1960, p. 342-343.

(31) E. ROMMEL: *Guerra senza odio*, op. cit. p. 311.

In this respect, Hitler ordered the seizure the key to the North Italian locations, as determined by plan ALARICO, and at dawn on 26 July elements of the German 44th Division and the Alpine School at Innsbruck crossed the Brenner to reinforce the contingent already on the other side of the border.

From 1 August then entered into force a new plan of the O.K.W., Called AXIS, that unlike ALARICO was not just about the control of northern Italy, but of the whole peninsula and its structures⁽³²⁾. Since then, the Germans installed, among other thing, their detachments on communication nodes, on power stations and industrial plants, ignoring the protests of the Italian authorities. Other Germanic contingents penetrated from France, creating the same 1 August in the northern Italy the already planned Command of the Army Group B of Rommel, whose constitution, however, was officially communicated to the Comando Supremo only on 17 August⁽³³⁾. By that day, which also marked the fall of Sicily, they had set foot on the peninsula the following new German forces.

From France had entered the 76th, the 94th and 305th Panzergrenadier Div. intended for Liguria and 2nd paratroopers Div. intended for Lazio. Sending to Italy latter division of Gen. Student, commander of the XI Fliegerkorps in France, was then to declare:

"The Italian High Command, who had not been forewarned of his arrival, he was told that the division would be sent as reinforcement for Sicily and Calabria. In fact the instructions that were given to me, directly from Hitler, were to keep myself close to Rome and also assume the command of the 3rd Panzer Division, which had brought in that area. With these

(32) U .S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op cit. p. 287-288.

(33) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/C: "Historical Journal of the Supreme Command", the day August 17, 1943; HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit. p. 211-213 and U .S. ARMY IN WORLD W AR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*. op. cit., p. 293. Army Group B was made up, as we have already mentioned, by LXXXVII Corps (76th, 94th and 305th Div.). Rommel pointed out in his memoirs that the 44th Panzergrenadier Div. consisted of Bavarian and Austrian troops, and boasted of motto "Hoch und Deutschmeister" already led by the Habsburg Grenadier Regiment who had fought in 1848 during the Five Days of Milan, See. *Guerra senza odio*, op. cit. p. 314.

two divisions had to keep myself ready to disarm the Italian forces around Rome" ⁽³⁴⁾.

From Germany had entered instead by the second half of August the 44th Div. and the aforementioned contingent of Alpine School to oversee the Alto Adige, the 65th Panzergrenadier Div. and the 24th and "Hitler" Panzer Divisions, intended for Apennines Tuscan-Emilian.

In the same time they widened into larger areas of land the German troops already in southern Italy and by subordinate units of the O.B.S. of Kesselring, while those used in Sardinia and Corsica, respectively equal to a division and a brigade, radiated along the coasts.

At the end of August were therefore present in Italy were seventeen divisions and two German brigades against twenty-six Italian divisions, so it is natural to wonder what would happen if the Italian military resistance to German occupation had occurred as early as July 26, 1943 and had not been attempted only at the time of the proclamation of the armistice with a relativity of much less favorable forces.

Instead, as we have already seen in chapter XI, paragraph 7, the grievances of the Comando Supremo in front of the German progressive strengthening in Italy were not due to characterize the energy and indeed went gradually attenuated, until reaching the noted Directive of Ambrosio on August 31, that it was "now useless to again discuss and fitting approach to the German demands" ⁽³⁵⁾.

It is interesting in this regard to recall what were the comments of the high military spheres and Nazi policies the inadequate Italian reaction to the precautionary German measures started in late July. In a meeting on August 3rd Gen. Jodi, after having notified the Führer the virtual cessation of all Italian resistance to the influx of new German troops on the peninsula, he estimated, along with Donitz, that meant a rethinking of the Badoglio Government and its alignment with the directives of Berlin. Hitler however, was more skeptical and realistic, argued that the Italian attitude was determined by the need to

(34) B.H. LIDDELL HART: *Stona militare della seconda guerra mondiale*, op. cit., p. 635.

(35) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/D: "Historical Diary of the Supreme Command", phonogram of the Supreme Command No. 16455/op of 31 August 1943 addressed to Superesercito.

buy time before they could come to an agreement with the Allies and the subsequent openly break with Germany.

The German project to prevent or repress by force what was called the Italian about-face was still revealed, more or less explicitly, by Adm. Canaris, head of the German Information Service (Abwehr), Gen. Ame, Chief of the S.I.M., in an interview which took place in Venice on August 3 ⁽³⁶⁾.

Therefore, also in the light of the memorandum 26 (C.S.M. from the S.M.R.E. of August 4 - we have already examined in chapter XI, paragraph 7 - would have expected at least better supervision of the prisoner Mussolini, after his transfer to the Gran Sasso, where he was instead easily released on September 12 by German paratroopers of Maj. Otto Skorzeny. But at that time, as has been written, "the game of the parties in Rome had already become so murky ensnared by all top leaders and to make it unsolvable and, what is worse, no coherent political action in a crucial and dramatic moment" ⁽³⁷⁾.

Meanwhile, since July 31, as Hitler suspected, it had been decided by the King, Badoglio, Foreign Minister Guariglia and Gen. Ambrosio to complete negotiations for an armistice with the Allies. We have to respect already mentioned earlier diplomatic contacts with the enemy that took place in Portugal on August 4 by the Marquis d'Ajeta, in Tangier August 5 by the Consul Berio and in Madrid and again in Lisbon between 15 and 19 of the month by Gen. Castellano ⁽³⁸⁾.

At the same time, however, it was felt by the Badoglio Government need urgently to reassure the Germans, what was the main task entrusted to the respondent Italian delegation to the Tarvisio talks on August 6 last meeting at the political level and not just technical between the two Governments of the Axis. In this conference they participated, in addition to the two Chiefs of State Ambrosio and Keitel, even the foreign ministers and Guariglia

(36) . AMÈ: *Guerra segreta in Italia*, Rome 1954. p. 184.

(37) C. DE RISIO: *Generali, servizi segreti e fascismo*, op. cit., p. 213,

(38) M. TOSCANO: *Gli archivi militari americani e gli armistizi italiani del 1943*, in "Nuova Antologia", January 1966

Ribbentrop, the latter so suspicious to fear even being delivered by the Italians to the Anglo-Americans⁽³⁹⁾.

The results of the Tarvisio conference did not convince Hitler if the latter on Aug. 9, at a conference with Adm. Donitz, again expressed the opinion that the King and Badoglio were already plotting the exit of the conflict. Two days later, however, Hitler gave his approval to the project of Rommel a clarifying meeting with the Italian military leaders, who, in exchange of removal of the German divisions from the area of Rome, was to be offered a common defense plan of the peninsula, impossible to circumvent.

Then came to the conference of Casalecchio, near Bologna, which was on 15 August attended by Gen. Jodl, Rommel, Roat and Rossi and he saw once again the Germans anxious to justify their military buildup in the central and northern areas of the peninsula with the need to contrast enemy landing north of Rome, and the Italians constantly tense not to have discovered their negotiations with the Anglo-Americans.

The same August 15th the new Minister and Chief of Staff of the Royal Navy, Adm. De Courten, he informed Doritz that would take the Italian battle fleet and would reinforce the defense of the bay of Naples and the Pontine coast*. This assurance did not fail to impress some in German naval circles, but not the Grand Admiral, increasingly convinced, like Hitler, the existence of secret contacts between Italy and the Allies, that the Badoglio government was trying to mask with promises loyalty to the Axis and with the assurance of maximum military engagement against the Anglo-Americans⁽⁴⁰⁾.

If the meeting of Tarvisio represented the last day political talks between the two Axis partners, one held on August 21, 1943 at the Comando Supremo, present Ambrosio and

*A region in Italy near Rome.

(39) The Foreign Minister Guarigliat among other things, tried to reassure the Germans coming to say: "First care of His Majesty and the Marshal Badoglio was to declare that Italy continues the war, keeping its word. This public declaration made by great men such as King and Badoglio is not to be doubted, otherwise the country is deeply hurt feelings in its sense of honor." See. Also P. MAITESE: *Lo sbarco in Sicilia*, op. cit., p. 308 In this regard, the US Army's official report points out mischievously in the habit of the House of Savoy" in performing deftly the company to change the field at war from side to side." U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 400

(40) K. Doenitz: *Dieci anni e venti giorni*, op. cit., p. 344

Kesselring, was the last meeting between the top military leaders ⁽⁴¹⁾. In this circumstance, expanding what is already promised by Adm. De Courten to Donitz on August 15, it was confirmed the intervention of the entire Italian battle fleet in the case of the Anglo-American landing not only on the continent but also in Sardinia and Corsica ⁽⁴²⁾. Orders then prevent this indicated naval intervention to be resolved in a sterile and useless sacrifice, it was agreed to ensure the Italian units that minimum air escort allowing them day come to contact with the enemy.

In another detailed meeting held the next day at Supermarina with representatives of Superaereo and 2nd Luftflotte, Adm. Sansonetti, Assistant Chief of Staff, let it be known that the order of magnitude of the desired aerial escort by the Royal Navy had "not to be less than 30 more aircraft simultaneously flying on the sky of the naval forces." Gen. Silvestri of Superaereo said that by the Air Force were currently available for work with the ships just two fighter groups, for a total of fifty aircraft, but it is hoped to reinforce this number by moving in other units when needed from central Italy and from Puglia. This would have increased from ten to fifteen the number of aircraft assigned to each escort shift.

However, it was stressed that this could only happen if the fleet, heading to a battle that was to begin and end during the daylight hours, it had to kept "within the limit of 80-85 miles from the starting airfields" scattered along the peninsula, Sardinia and Corsica.

For his part, speaking on behalf of the O.B.S., Capt. Feldmann argued that the 2nd Luftflotte would put at the disposal of Italian ships three fighter groups with which, as Adm. Sansonetti recognized, it would reach the projected number of thirty aircraft per shift. The same admiral also recommended that the details for the proper functioning of the escort be studied between O.B.S. and Superaereo.

Eight days later, on August 30, although it was intimately

(41) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/D: "History of the Supreme Command Diary". Day August 21, 1943

(42) This indeed seemed in keeping with Directive. 15981/op of the Supreme Command dated 17 August 1943, under which Supermarina had to have on the "sounding of alarm and the release of all" available the naval forces in the area concerned, the Tyrrhenian and Ionian." See. A.U.S.E., folder 1504/C cited.

convinced that the Italian Navy would never employed its fleet even in defense of the continental national territory, Gen. von Richthofen, commander of 2nd Luftflotte, sent Supermarina a document entitled "Counter air escort of naval forces in the special case" ⁽⁴³⁾. In it he claimed that if the Italian battle fleet had gone out to sea to fight the enemy, would be used all fighter forces available for its protection, so that the 2nd Luftflotte alone would keep on friendly ships a constant number of about twenty German interceptors.

For its part the S.M.R.E., after a long process that began on August 18, made enforceable on Sept. 2 the famous *Memorandum 44 Op.* That emanated directives to combat units on the reactions to be taken in the event of likely and forthcoming German aggression ⁽⁴⁴⁾. The performance of these important directives could take place with the explicit and formal order of S.M.R.E. or autonomous initiative of local commands.

Finally, the armistice of Cassibile was signed, the three days later it circulated among Supreme Command (September 6) to the three Armed Forces Chief of Staff *Memorandum n. 1* which, along with the *Memorandum 44*, outlined the retaliatory measures to be applied in case of aggressive Germanic action ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

4. AIR-NAVAL ACTIONS FROM THE SECOND HALF OF AUGUST THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER

As we have already mentioned, the Supreme Command, with its Directive 15981/op of 17 August 1943, the same day of the fall of Sicily, ordered to prepare Supermarina of "the preparation and release of all naval forces in the sector concerned, the Tyrrhenian and Ionian" ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

With the same directive was ordered to Superaereo to provide,

(43) BUNDESARCHIV: MILITÄRARCHIV -Friburgo: Gen. Kdo 2. Fliegerkorps, Br.B Protocol nr. 1281/43 Gdkos.

(44) The Memo 44 Op. Was made known to the command of the 7th Army on September 3, 1943. See. A.U.S.E., folder 2004: "Report on the Activities of the 7th Army from September 1 to October 31, 1943", p. 3.

(45) A.U.S.E., folder 3050: "Comando Supremo"

(46) A.U.S.E., folder 1504/C: "Historical Journal of the Comando Supremo", Directive n. 15981/op of 17 August 1943.

always on alert, "the intervention in mass of torpedo bombers against convoys from the greater distances, the attack of all remaining available forces against the landing craft of the first group and essentially against the enemy units who made landfall, and air escort to the main naval forces in agreement with Supermarina"⁽⁴⁷⁾.

In the same circumstances the Supreme Command recommended the naval battle forces to predict an similar operation not against heavy enemy forces, but against the convoys, using subtle means to directly attack the waves of landing craft, while in case of successful enemy amphibious operation the R. Air Force would have to ensure the troops of the defense a more effective cooperation then the flawed recorded in Sicily.

The directive of August 17, apparently mindful of the facts of Augusta-Syracuse finally recommended the following:

"The General Staffs and O. B. S. in the dependent forces spread the belief that weapons, means of connection, etc. They must be used to the extreme: it is preferable that they be captured rather intact than missing prematurely to their task because destroyed prematurely"⁽⁴⁸⁾.

The above guidelines, drawn up in anticipation of other invasions of the country, were repeated on August 21 in the famous conversation between Ambrosio and Kesselring and in detail the following day the meeting between the leaders of Supermarina, Superaereo and the German 2nd Luftflotte. They were eventually called up on August 30 by Gen. von Richthofen about the mentioned Germanic air escort offer to the Italian fleet. However nothing happened and could not be expected in those days on the Eve of the armistice, so that the air-sea contrasts of the enemy's movements in the second half of August and during the operation BAYTOWN fell almost exclusively on the shoulders of submariners and German pilots.

On August 22, the *U-431* submarine unsuccessfully attacked off the coast of Palermo a enemy cruiser, while the *U-458* was

(47) *Ibid*

(48) *Ibid*

sunk southeast of Pantelleria by the Joint Action of two destroyers: the English *Easton* and the Greek *Pindus*. The following day, however, the *U-380*, Commander. Röther sank northeast of Palermo the US cargo ship *Pierre Soule* and the 26th of the month the *U-410* of Lieutenant (jg) Fenski sunk to the east of Bona another two American steamers, the *John Bell* and *Richard Henderson*, forming part of convoy UGS.14 ⁽⁴⁹⁾.

The last German submarine arm success in the period considered was the one caught by *U-617* of the famous Lieutenant Brandi, who torpedoed and sank on 6 September in the waters of Gibraltar the British destroyer *Puckeridge*. This action, however, was fatal to the attacking submarine, located and attacked by surface ships and aircraft, it suffered such damage as to be forced to run aground on the nearby Spanish coast, where it was destroyed by the crew.

Even the Italian-German mines, widely scattered in the waters of Malta and in the Sicilian Channel, imposed their toll on allied traffic, causing the loss of the American landing craft *LCT-154* on August 31 at Cape Bon and the British steamer *Seltinge* on 6 September to the south of Malta.

Meanwhile the Luftwaffe continued to target the Anglo-American ports, and in the night on 18 August seventy-five German bombers sank in Bizerte the *LCT -1* and damaged a "Liberty ship". Two days later the British Transport *Ulster Monarch* suffered damage during the German raid at Cape Bon, while any results, received the attack carried out on August 22 on Bizerte by five Italian Cant Z.1007 bis, one of which did not return to its Sardinian base of departure.

On August 23, the Luftwaffe did remind Americans, as he wrote historian Morison, who "was yet to put an end to it," resolutely attacking the port of Palermo. The submarine chasers *SC-694* and *SC-696*, focused in full, exploded and projected into the air large flaming wreckage, which damaged a British ship and a military tugboat. Even the bay of Augusta was targeted on 24 and 30 August by German aircraft, which in

(49) A. Santoni -F. Mattesini: *La partecipazione tedesca alla guerra aeronavale nel Mediterraneo 1940-1945*, op. cit., p. 462.

first occasion put out of service for a certain period the big American oil tanker *Esso Proviaence* ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

The North African ports of embarkation suffered in the same period renewed Germanic raids, among which are those of Algiers on August 27, of Oran of 29 and Bizerte on 7 September. Meanwhile, the US destroyer *Kendrick*, escorting the convoy UGF.10, was struck and damaged off the coast of Grano on September 3, the day of the operation BAYTOWN.

On part of the Allies it was made the usual aerial bombing prior to the landing in Calabria, targeting roads, railway stations and airports in southern Italy. The more massive raids in this context was that conducted August 19 by 233 American bombers on the Foggia railway station, which was followed by the 25th of the month a series of attacks on neighboring airports by 136 four-engined bombers and 145 fighter bombers ⁽⁵¹⁾.

Finally, in more direct support to the now next landing operation across the Strait, the British battleships *Nelson* and *Rodney* and the cruiser *Orion*, accompanied by nine destroyers, bombard on August 31 the Axis batteries on the Calabrian coast, encountering a Italian-German fire response defined as "ineffective" ⁽⁵²⁾.

5. THE LANDING IN CALABRIA AND BRITISH ADVANCE UNTIL 8 SEPTEMBER (see map n. 30)

After the British had landed in the last few nights of August exploring patrols, responsible, as we have said, to identify the beaches for the main landing and report information on the distribution and extent of the defenses, the 630 pieces of British artillery concentrated on the Sicilian shores of the Straits began a large preparatory bombardment to

(50) *Ibid*, p. 463

(51) G. SANTORO: *L'Aeronautica italiana nella seconda guerra mondiale*, vol. II, cit., Pagg.565-566.

(52) T. DORLING (aka Taffrail): *Mediterraneo occidentale 1942-1945*, op. cit., p. 111.

03:45 September 3. They echoed the pieces of 2 cruisers, 3 monitors, six destroyers and 2 British gunboats⁽⁵³⁾.

Then at 04:30 that day, he would also mark the Italian armistice, the British 5th Inf. Div. left and the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. right landed on the beach by twenty-two LST and 270 landing craft of all kinds near Catona and Gallico Marina, beginning the amphibious phase of operation BAYTOWN and advancing respectively on Villa San Giovanni and Reggio Calabria.

No resistance was encountered when approaching and along these routes, so that the amphibious operation was later dubbed by the British "The Strait of Messina race"⁽⁵⁴⁾. All the initial objectives were achieved thus very easily and particularly the Canadians, entered Reggio, they pushed along the inner road towards Aspromonte, leaving the Ionian coastal route 106, which was barred to the south to prevent its use to outflank the defenders.

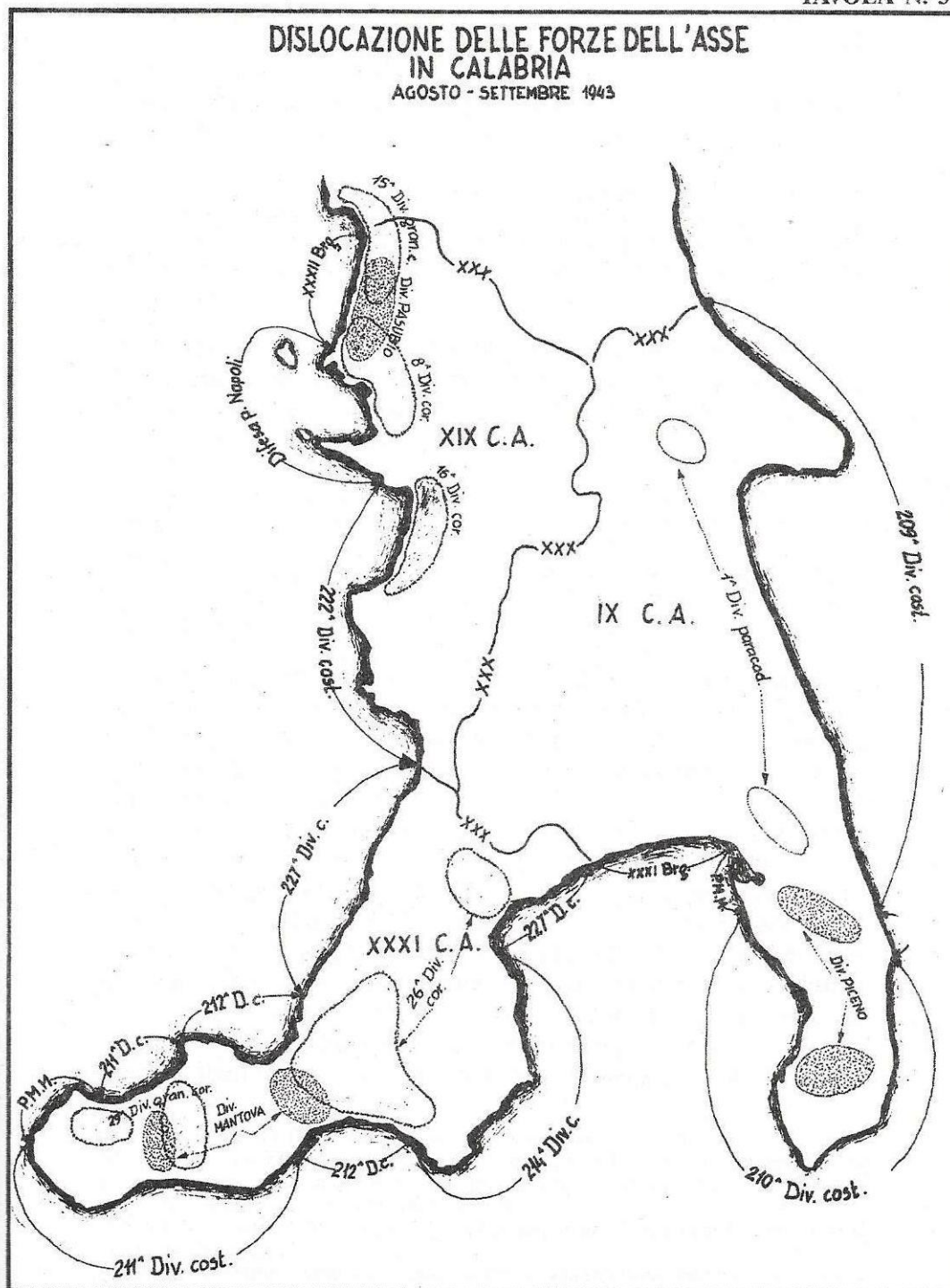
The next goal of the British XIII Army Corps, consisting of the above two divisions, was represented by the defilade of Catanzaro between the gulfs of Squillace and St. Euphemia, the possession of which would grant the invaders an easily defensible position against possible enemy counter-attacks and would guarantee to Allied shipping complete freedom of transit in the Strait of Messina.

Despite several warning signs, the defenders were initially taken by surprise, not least because the landing was carried more to the south than estimated by the Italian-German Commands. Therefore

(53) The cruisers were the *Mauntius* and *Orion* and monitors the *Erebus*, the *Roberts* and *Abercrombie*, but a special mention should be given to two river gunboats *Aphis* and *Scarab*. Completed in 1915 as a gunboats for the rivers of Mesopotamia and then China, at the beginning of World War II faced the crossing of the China Sea, Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean to arrive in Malta in April 1940. From this new base and then attended the maritime support of British troops engaged in the lengthy operations in the Libyan-Egyptian desert to shift, as we are seeing, into the Straits of Messina, their intense activity, as important as their length of service, provides an example on which to meditate, than they can give to a Navy powerful means even if antiquated and inadequate member, sent to the sea without plaintive desktop calculations.

(54) T. DORLING (aka Taffrail): *Mediterraneo occidentale 1942-1945* op. cit., p. 116

TAVOLA N. 30



Montgomery so he could summarize the first phase of the operation amphibious ⁽⁵⁵⁾:

"The Italian coastal troops and their artillery surrendered after firing a few shots and the only action of the German fire was reported a spasmodic long distance shelling from guns posted in the hinterland. These pieces were quickly silenced by air strikes. "

After all, only at 07^h45 on 3 September the 7th Army Command was able to compose a picture of the situation albeit partial and to transmit it to the S.M.R.E. more than an hour later with the following telegram ⁽⁵⁶⁾:

"07:15 hours of September 3: After violent bombardment began 04:00 hours, numerous landing craft have landed at Gallico Marina northern Reggio.

07:40 hours: tanks & troops landed from a hundred landing craft reached the height of the Scacciati stream south of Gallico Marina. tanks precede the troops. "

The Anglo-Canadian in fact, occupied in the morning almost uncontrasted Villa S. Giovanni to the north and Archi and Reggio Calabria with the airport to the south, entered in the night Calanna and St. Stefano d'Aspromonte with the Canadian 1st Inf. Div. and Cannitello and Scilla with the UK 5th Inf. Div. ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Contacts between the invaders and the Italian - German maneuver contingent missed all day of the 3rd, as well as units of the 29th Panzergrenadier Div. located on the Aspromonte had received the same day the order of Kesselring not to engage and withdraw for the time being on the Bagnara-Gambarie line, but only carried the works of demolition to delay the advance of the troops of Montgomery to the north for as long as possible. At Gambarie were also deployed two battalions of the "Nimbus" Div. to bar the Aspromonte Plans ⁽⁵⁸⁾. The 211th Coastal Div.

(55) B.L. MONTGOMERY: *Da El Alamein al fiume Sangro*, op. cit., p. 158.

(56) A.U.S.E., folder 2004: "Report on the Activities of the 7th Army from September 1 to October 31, 1943", Annex 20: telexpresso the 7th Army Command No. 2/3700 of 09:00 on September 3, 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(57) A.U.S.E., folder 2004: "Report on the Activities of the 7th Army from September 1 to October 31, 1943", p. 4.

(58) A.U.S.E., folder 3050: "Comando Supremo", "Summary of events according to the news prevented up to 08:30 on 4 September 1943 '.

was however plagued by a number of defections, which were then communicated to the S.M.R.E. by Command of the 7th Army ⁽⁵⁹⁾.

The German air force intervened on the landing zone at 11:00 that morning and Italian at 15:00, using "on the Reggio-Gallico area fifteen and twenty-three fighter bombers" ⁽⁶⁰⁾. But since most of southern Italy airfields had been put out of use by the ally air raids, the Axis aviation intervention was almost always untimely, as well as effectively offset by enemy supervision. Therefore failed, on September 4 also an attack of eleven FW 190 to the British ships crisscrossing north of Palmi, as well as an incursion of seventeen Italian Re.2002 and eight MC205 on the beaches between Archi and Reggio Calabria requested by the Command of the XXXI Corps Army ⁽⁶¹⁾.

Meanwhile the night between 3 and 4 September had played a second minor British landing in Bagnara, where they landed the Commandos of the 1st Reconnaissance Squadron, who realized the first contact with the focus on the 15th Regt. of the 29th Panzergrenadier Div. "commanded by the famous Colonel Ulich" ⁽⁶²⁾.

At the same time, and precisely at 23:15 of September 3, Gen. Arisio, unaware of the signing of the armistice, ordered Gen. Mercalli, commander of the XXXI Corps by phone, "to maintain at all costs the possession of Aspromonte," and, in the event of failure, a fighting retreat on Cittanova, in every way delaying the enemy advance ⁽⁶³⁾.

According to these Directives, Gen. Mercalli these immediate measures to defend to the bitter end Aspromonte and to launch a counter-attack to be carried out along the S. Alessio - Gallico way in the morning of September 4 with the participation of the German troops of the 29th Div. But this counter-offensive did not take place, since the bulk of that Germanic division had

(59) A.U.S.E., folder 2004: "Report on the Activities of the 7th Army from September 1 to October 31, 1943", September 4th, p. 8 and Annex 52: telexpresso the 7th Army Command No. 2/3769 of 6 September 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(60) A.U.S.E., folder 2004: "Report on the Activities of the 7th Army from September 1 to October 31, 1943", p. 4.

(61) A.U.S.E., folder 2004 cit., Annex 7.

(62) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit. p. 240

(63) A.U.S.E., folder 2004: "Report on the Activities of the 7th Army from September 1 to October 31, 1943," pp. 5-6 and Annex 2 ..

received Kesselring's order to withdraw by September 8th on Castrovillari, in defense of a feared landing in the Gulf of Taranto. The Germans therefore they merely to contain the enemy with rearguard actions and extensive road blocks ⁽⁶⁴⁾.

These works of demolition, made by tirelessly German engineers and often without advance notice to the Italian commands, caused many problems to the operation of the units of the XXXI Corps, but also imposed a substantial slowdown in the English advance, as Montgomery himself admitted ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

However, this independent attitude by the Germans led the 7th Army Command to ask for the intervention of the S.M.R.E. to clarify once and for all the problem of dependence. The Deputy Chief of the G.S. of the Army said on September 4 that for the conduct of operations had to be reached a Solomonic local understanding between the commands of the Italian 7th Army of Gen. Arisio and the German 10th Army of Gen. von Vietinghoff, failing which, however, the Command Gen. Arisio "would have to adjust the operations of the Italian troops based on those implemented by the German 10th Army" ⁽⁶⁶⁾. Which was a convoluted system to recognize even in Calabria the Italian subordination to German commands.

Following the development of the events and the clarifications received from Rome, Gen. Arisio ordered at 19:30 on 4 September of the "Mantova" Inf. Div. to retreat to the cut through of Marcellinara, located in the defilade of Catanzaro, where the 26th Panzergrenadier Div already was and a Regiment of the German 29th Div. ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

For their part, the British Command, found the difficulty to cross the Aspromonte, where there were numerous interruptions and demolition practiced by the Germans pushed their vanguards along the Ionian coastal Hwy 106, at first not considered

(64) *Ibid*, p. 6 and Annex 4. The German 26th Div. and a regiment of the 29th Div. would however remain for the moment in the bottleneck of Catanzaro and placed on them would be the task of defending the central area of Calabria, See. *Ibid*, Annex 5

(65) B.L. MONTGOMERY: *Da El Alamein al fiume Sangro*, op. cit. p. 159

(66) A.U.S.E., folder 2004: "Report on the Activities of the 7th Army from September 1 to October 31, 1943", p. 6

(67) A.U.S.E., folder 2004: cit., Annex 6: radio message of the 7th Army Command No. 2/8135 of the hour 19:30 of September 4, 1943.

as a route of penetration. Therefore until on September 5 were easily achieved by Canadian troops on the Ionian coast Bova Marina, Capo Spartivento and Brancaleone Marina while Gen. Arisio reiterated to the Command of the XXXI Corps at 12:30 pm of the same day of the 5th not to commit the "Mantova" Inf. Div. south of the Marcellinara cut through ⁽⁶⁸⁾.

The unresolved problem of the uniqueness of command between Italian and German, which was entrusted by Rome more to good local will than a military logic, was the subject of an interview later that afternoon of September 5, two days later not known of the signing of the armistice of Cassibile, that took place between Arisio and Kesselring, without any tangible results ⁽⁶⁹⁾.

Meanwhile, the easy penetration of the Canadian vanguards along the Ionian coast led Montgomery to order on the morning of the 6th to make every effort in that direction and to reach Catanzaro directly along the Gulf of Squillace ⁽⁷⁰⁾. Was instead canceled due to bad weather, a expected landing in Gioia Tauro for the night between 5 and 6 September by the 231st "Malta" Brigade. This resort on the Tyrrhenian Hwy 18 was still occupied by the British 5th Inf. Div. at noon on the 6th, after fighting with the German rearguard ⁽⁷¹⁾, while no contact with the enemy was still reported at 10:00 on 7 September by Gen. Arisio ⁽⁷²⁾. At the same time the latter telephoned Gen. Roatta asking permission to leave the Marcellinara cut through and to be able to retire on the Mount Pollino line on the border with Basilicata ⁽⁷³⁾.

This authorization was granted by the Chief of the Army General Staff only in the afternoon of 8 September ⁽⁷⁴⁾. So no earlier than 18:00 on that fateful day Gen. Arisio could

(68) A.U.S.E., folder 2004 cit., Annex 8: radio message of the 7th Army Command No. 2/8148 of 12:30 of 5 September 1943 addressed to the Command of the XXXI Corps.

(69). A.U.S.E., folder 2004: Cit. p. 10 and Annex 9

(70) B.L. MONTGOMERY: *Da El Alamein al fiume Sangro*, op. cit. p. 160

(71) A.U.S.E., folder 2004, at the telegram of the 7th Army Command No. 2/3782 06:00 hours of September 7, 1943.

(72) *Ibid*, radio message of the 7th Army Command No. 2/3785 10:00 am on 7 September 1943 addressed to the S.M.R.E.

(73) *Ibid*, Annex 11: telephone communication than 10:00 am on 7 September 1943 between Gen. Arisio and Gen. Roatta.

(74) A.U.S.E., folder 2004: "Report on the Activities of the 7th Army from September 1 to October 31, 1943", p. 11.

order to the XXXI Corps to carry out "as quickly as possible its withdrawal on the Pallino line) ⁽⁷⁵⁾. Thus the retreat occurred after the proclamation of the armistice.

Meanwhile the troops of the British XIII Corps occupied by the evening of 7 September Nicotera on the Tirreno, Taurianova to the interior and Siderno Marina on the Ionian coast. So on the night between the 7th and the 8th, the 231st "Malta" Brigade, that could not land due to bad weather in Gioia Tauro, was landed in Pizzo Calabro, but bearing down perilously close to a large queue of the German rearguard units in retreat, who were recalled immediately to the site ⁽⁷⁶⁾. The fighting near the beaches of Pizzo Calabro were therefore bloody, while in the same circumstances the landing ship *LST-65* was knocked out of combat by the German artillery ⁽⁷⁷⁾. Nevertheless this last amphibious operation succeeded in accelerating the retreat of the Germans, by preventing them from carrying out the demolitions along the coastal road.

On 8 September at 19:30 the 7th Army Command was aware of the armistice declaration, but for the rest of the day "gave no specific orders to subordinate commands" because "in waiting for orders from above appeared sufficient to the command, also to for the application of the "Memorandum 44", the statement made at 20:00 on the radio by Marshal Badoglio" ⁽⁷⁸⁾.

Only after receiving at 09:00 am on September 9, detailed provisions by the S.M.R.E., did Gen. Arisio imparted to the three subordinate Corps Commands (10:00) appropriate orders aimed at:

- suspend hostilities against the Anglo-Americans;
- react, as provided by the "Memorandum 44", to German hostile acts;

(75) *Ibid*, Annex 13: radio message of the 7th Army Command No. 2/8285 of 18:00 on 8 September 1943 addressed to the Command of the XXXI Corps.

(76) HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE: *History of the Second World War - U.K. Military series. The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. V: cit. p. 241. The German units engaged in the circumstance were the III/4th Paratroopers Regt. and III/71st Grenadiers Regt.

(77) S.E. MORISON: *History of U.S., Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. IX: cit. Italian translation by the S.M.E., pp .368-369. This ship received on board more 40 cannon shots and was taken to have struck.

(78) A.U.S.E., folder 2004: "Report on the Activities of the 7th Army from September 1 to October 31, 1943", p. 13.

- Ready to assemble and keep all units not already having specific tasks;
- Collect and concentrate all the material ⁽⁷⁹⁾.

Upon entry into force of the armistice, the British XIII Army Corps had arrived in his advance to the entrance to the Catanzaro defilade and reached and the Nicastro - Catanzaro line on 10 September. All the remaining territory of Calabria was instead cleared by the Germans only the following 22 September ⁽⁸⁰⁾.

(79) *Ibid*, Annex 15: telespresso in light of the of 7th Army Command n. 2/8400 at 10:00 am on September 9, 1943.

(80) Among the factors of the British success in the Calabria campaign is the remarkable the ability of the British logistics service, which in the first three days of the operation was able to ferry over the Strait of Messina 5,300 vehicles, while it had been planned 5,000 in the first five days. See. T. DORLING (aka Taffrail): *Mediterraneo occidentale 1942-1945*, op. cit., p. 117.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In addition to the conclusions drawn here and there at the end of operational phases or individual significant events and in addition to the first comments reported in Chapter XII, section 6, we can add some notes here concerning the most obvious teachings of the Sicilian campaign.

The defense of Sicily was in starting a enterprise without much chance of success and this is not for the alleged global numerical superiority of the Anglo-American troops, which in truth there was (at the beginning 260,000 attackers against 181,000 defenders), but because the absolute dominion of the sea and an undisputed though often ill-used Allied air air superiority.

About the aviation problem, are known the complaints of the Italian-German Commands in Sicily, applicant's repeatedly and loudly wider engagement of the Axis air forces and for the support to the troops and for the interdiction. The Italian-German air strikes instead realized sparingly perhaps superior to the difficulties in which they then go through the R. Aeronautica and 2nd Luftflotte and was also directed almost exclusively against naval targets or against the bases of the enemy.

However, it is equally true that in many crucial moments of the campaign, such as during the morning Italian-German counteroffensive of 11 July on Gela, the Allied air forces also notable by its absence, not to mention the grievances both of the English 8th Army and the US 7th Army as to the general lack of sensitivity shown by the USAAF and R.A.F. in all that it was not a strategic bombing during the preparatory phase of operation HUSKY.

If we add to this the disappointments represented by all Allied Airborne assault operations and air landings, we can conclude that the undeniable major Anglo-American air presence on Sicilian skies was so much more blatant because of the unsatisfactory interdiction by the air forces of the Axis, and in particular of the Italian, that not for tactical merits and for a

successful strategic planning by the men of Air Marshal Tedder.

Nor can we consider as a decisive factor in the campaign a supposed superiority of the Allied military doctrines, given the absolute failure of the Anglo-American way of reaching in a short time to close the valve in the Straits of Messina. This is due to the inability of the 8th Army of Montgomery overcome by momentum the plain of Catartlia, of a guilty general shyness to launch in time consistent amphibious operations behind the changing Axis flanks, a sparingly when used in mass the prevailing armored troops, and finally the "distraction" of Patton towards Palermo ⁽¹⁾. Neither these Allied deficiencies can be fully justified by the Anglo-American conviction, underlined by official US report, that it was necessary to act to economically in anticipation of a fierce Italian defense, then - according to the Americans - was lacking ⁽²⁾.

Considering the above, it seems to us so that we can identify in the absolute dominion of the sea the main reason of the Allied success, achieved in the relatively short time of 38 days.

In Sicily, as in the Pacific and at Salerno, Anzio and Normandy, not to mention - coming closer to us - the American counter-offensive during the Korean war and the recent conflict over the Falklands, the determining factor for the success of an operation overseas has always been represented by a healthy use of the dominion of the sea, in turn guaranteed or the prior and classical destruction of the enemy naval aviation potential, or inability or the inertia of the opposing fleet.

The advantages of this dominion of the sea from the other side during the Sicilian campaign emerged not only by the continuous influx of maritime supplies for the Anglo-American front, but also on the occasion of the deadly interdiction strikes by US cruisers and destroyers poured on the spearheads of the "Livorno "and" H. Goering" counter-attack on Gela. This contribution

(1) The historian Baldwin called the Anglo-American war conducted during the Sicilian countryside a "judicious strategy, but very traditional and prudent" and "without a hint of flair" See. H.W.

BALDWIN: *Battaglie vinte e perdute 1941-1943. La campagna di Sicilia*, Milano 1971, p. 238

(2) U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II: *Sicily and the surrender of Italy*, op. cit., p. 419

was later renovated in numerous other actions of fire support along the eastern and northern coasts of the island's south.

It is more than significant, and that with the exception of the condition imposed by the Montgomery's questionable decision to circumvent as well from the west the plain of Catania and the range of Mount Etna, the Anglo-American troops have sought a way to coastal penetration that would allow them to enjoy the support of the naval cannons.

The naval guns, in fact, in addition to being always higher in caliber and in volume compared to those field and also to those coastal - usually draw from ships and then demolish the old fashioned type - have the great advantage of the continuous mobility and often a great masking by means of curtains of artificial fog. The long range of naval guns for medium calibers then exceeded 25 kilometers, and for the big guns, extends to 40, allowed indeed to fleets of Second World War to keep very wide of the coastal minefields which had instead marked previously the failure of the Japanese conquest by sea of the Russian Fortified town of Port Arthur in 1904 and the Anglo-French humiliation of the Dardanelles in 1915.

In the rest of Sicily there was not even the idea of an uninterrupted minefields and even a continuous line of fortifications and coastal artillery, so that the Italian defenses along the coast, absolutely devoid of mobility, they ended up falling almost helpless under the arc of fire the Anglo-American naval batteries, they accomplished undisturbed the dual task of crushing the resistance of the defenders and protect the landing of friendly troops from possible counterattacks during the delicate phase of outlet to the ground position.

Another advantage enjoyed by the Anglo-Americans, again thanks to their dominion of the sea, was the already mentioned free availability of the maritime supply routes, which allowed him to continually ensure the necessary logistical support to the Army of Patton and Montgomery.

It must be recalled in this regard that the maritime supply structure moves on space more difficult to identify routes than those traveled by current land logistics and also that by acting against them, the enemy can take aim at both the carrier means that the road layout.

The grandeur of the Anglo-American naval effort in Sicily has been effectively described by Gen. von Senger with the following admiring expressions:

"To understand the magnitude of this superior opponent attacking from the sea must be seen with their own eyes. Personally I got home, the day July 12, 1943, while I was on the coast a few kilometers further east, to observe the show enjoyed by General Eisenhower, so I can make my own the words uttered by the then US commander: "... *I have to say the view of hundreds of ships with landing craft everywhere, who operated along the east coast of Licata, was an unforgettable sight...* ". It was unforgettable for me, but with feelings very different from those that animated Eisenhower!" ⁽³⁾.

But if the dominion of the sea offers a belligerent similar advantages, should also be associated with the weaker naval minded opponent tries to grab every opportunity to cancel or at least reduce this privilege, especially when operations are carried out in their waters; on its territory and still close to their bases.

This conduct of naval contrast unfortunately was not performed during the Sicilian campaign and the Italian battle fleet remained so to say, even so safe when you consider the already mentioned impairments, without consideration, it suffered at the hands of the expected air raids on La Spezia and La Maddalena .

But what is clear in this regard than the disturbingly large collection of the Supreme Command documents concerning the Sicilian campaign is the almost constant silence about the tasks and even the very existence of the Royal Navy. This last fact is hardly ever mentioned, even though it does not appear in numerous high-level meetings during operations on the island, is not included in the many issues raised during the campaign., It remains absent from any appreciation and by all odds in context Supreme command, in short, remains unnamed and ignored for almost any task in Sicily with an unjustified fatalism, as if the Kingdom of Italy, to the exclusion of

(3) F.M. SENGER und ETIERLIN: *Combattere senza paura e senza speranza*, op. cit., p. 251.

isolated actions of insidious vessels, it was reduced to possess not three, but only two Armed Forces ⁽⁴⁾.

On the ground airplanes repeatedly he aroused the surprise of the Anglo-American militancy of the modest Italian contingent after the good performances provided by them in the first counter attacks of the initial days of the Sicilian campaign.

In fact, the 6th Army was disintegrated almost immediately in its coastal components, immobile troops and too easily circumvented, while the maneuver units made available to the XVI Corps, that is, the Inf. Divisions "Livorno" and "Napoli", suffered a bloody trickle sacrificing the brave in vain counterattack in the first days against Gela and Syracuse - Augusta. They ceased quickly to form homogeneous units and their residue units ended up being inserted piecemeal among the Germanic ranks and under German orders.

Worst case was that the two mobile divisions of the XII Corps, ie the "Aosta" and the "Assietta", subjected to an endless series of orders and counter- orders of transfer and that ended up being decimated during their journeys from enemy air action and a plague desertions. Arrived at last in line before the Madonie and then immediately transferred on Caronie, these two divisions were no longer such, and their remains were also incorporated into the German defenses to defend the north-east cusp.

At the same time he had come to maturity the change in military leadership. On July 18, just eight days since the invasion, Gen. Hube replaced Gen. Rossi in command of German troops to the east and on August 2 he officially took over the management of the operations on the island,

The following day began the evacuation of Italian troops towards Calabria, while in the night on the 12th began the ferrying of the German contingents.

However it must not be forgotten that for at least

(4) For his part, Gen. Quercia concluded in the previously mentioned his speech at the Centre for High Military Studies attributing the insufficient cooperation of the Navy and Air Force also the brevity of real and proper strength in Sicily. Other factors would be, according to the author, the high and unpredictable number of stragglers, the inability to take advantage of suitable land for containment actions and the unfavorable evolution of political events, See. A. QUERCIA: *Situazione difensiva della Sicilia alla vigilia dello sbarco anglo-americano*, CASM, Rome 1951-1952

Fortnight the German XIV Army Corps resisted alone with its overall three Divisions (15th, 29th and "H. Goering" very small but supplemented by paratroopers), reinforced by Italian artillery, to the contemporary attacks of nine Allied divisions and that it was able in the end to save over the Strait not only his combat units almost intact, but also its logistics component.

With some reason why the historian Jackson concluded:

"The Allies occupied Sicily, in 38 days; but in regard to the Germans they could only claim to have ended the meeting on par"⁽⁵⁾.

In the face of any invasion from the sea is usually attends, in the enemy camp, a controversy about the non countermeasures or opportunities to counter attacks do not grab on the fly. So it was also for Sicily, so much so that to this day has heated discussions on the convenience or not to anchor the defenses along the beaches or keep more or less behind the coasts of the maneuvering masses. Few have instead recalled that during the entire Second World War, the Anglo-Americans have never failed any invasion attempt, and that even the formidable Japanese have not been able to repel an amphibious operation, despite having repeatedly changed their defensive tactics⁽⁶⁾.

In the strategic area the facts demonstrated the correctness of the views of Churchill. Operation HUSKY ensued in fact all four strategic goals:

- Liberation of the sea lanes in the central Mediterranean with full control of the Strait of Sicily;
- The fall of fascism and elimination of Italy from the conflict;
- Transfer of German divisions to Italy and the Balkans and therefore greater global dispersion of Germanic offensive and defensive energies;
- Aid indirectly provided to the Russians, simultaneously engaged in the great battle of Kursk, distracting to Italy and the Mediterranean new German contingents.

(5) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. Cit.; p. 56

(6) The failed Anglo-Candaese raid on Dieppe in August 1942 does not construct an exception to this rule, since, as we know, it was not an invasion, but only temporary as a big sabotage and reconnaissance operation.

In the victorious Sicily enterprise was had by implication also a moral revenge of the British prime minister, who was plagued by fatal experience of Gallipoli in 1915.

Finally, the Allies were able to draw from this first major amphibious operation against a vast enemy territory some logistical and maritime teachings for future engagements, and the opportunity to give back to the American troops that self-confidence that had been shaken from their misadventures in Tunisian territory ⁽⁷⁾.

The last important fact, in order of time, the Sicilian campaign was represented the skill with which over one hundred thousand Italian and German soldiers were able to leave the island 3 to 17 August, enterprises not undeservedly has been compared to similar evacuations Gallipoli and Dunkirk by the British in two world wars and of Guadalcanal and Kiska by the Japanese in the last war.

By contrast, this represented a visible failure of Eisenhower and his staff. But the British and Americans not only failed to stop the enemy's flow over the Strait of Messina, whilst enjoying an undisturbed naval dominance and overwhelming air superiority; in fact they were not even learned from HUSKY the reflections due on the German ability - not new, but reiterated in Sicily - the wonderfully use the land for defensive battles and containment This will fatally lead the Allies to painful disappointment in front of Cassino and then on Gothic line.

(7) W.G.F. JACKSON: *La battaglia d'Italia*, op. Cit.; p. 95,

Appendix no. 1

GENERAL STAFF OF THE R. ARMY
Army Information Service
S.I.E.

No Z: P./18002 of prot.

May 8, 1943-XXI

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Situation in the Mediterranean basin. Presumable Anglo-Saxon operational intentions.

1) Despite the recent occupation by the enemy of the air-naval bases of Bisena and Tunis, it remains, by the Axis, the possibility of interference by the Sicilian and Sardinian bases on routes through the Strait of Sicily.

The Anglo-Saxon forces stationed respectively in the western basin and in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean are therefore still separate and strengthening of strategic bases in the Middle and Near East must still proceed slower pace.

The logistical and operational efforts of the Anglo-Saxon is clearly its center of gravity in N .A.F., And two points of application:

-in the Tunisian sector to re-establish the bases efficiency severely damaged by Italian-German troops to retreat and to rearrange the forces that participated in the bloody operations;

-In the region of Algeria to create the foundations of broader operational developments on the European continent.

The increase diagram of ground forces rushed in by US and British in metropolis N.A.F., as evidenced by reports gradually already made by this S.I.E. is reproduced in the attached graph 1. (omitted)

2) In contrast to this enhancement at a fast pace of the army of the N.A.F., there is almost a stagnation in the increase of the forces stationed in the Middle and Near East.

Total:

- in the N.A.F. 30 Anglo-Saxon divisions (in addition to 9 French) whose forces amounted to 8 armored divisions;
- in the Middle East (including Libya): force of 25 divisions, including forces. equal to 3 heterogeneous armor divisions not yet hardened in the war environment, little operational value.

3) The ratio of ground forces between the two Mediterranean theaters of war is fully reflected in the report of the naval and air forces as shown in the following table:

	naval means							Aerial means			
	BB	CV	CR	DD	TB	SUB	LC	Ftr	Bom	Var type	Total
Mediterranean Central, West	3	1 + 2 Prob.	11	36	-	26	1,100	1,800	1,000	650	1,450
Mediterranean East	-	-	4	17	10	20	450	880	650	260	1,790
Total	3	2 + 1 prob	15	55	10	46	1,550	2,680	1,650	910	1,240

As for the deployment of special means to see attached sketch landing 3. (omitted)

4) The deadline for the opening of a second front on the European continent by the Anglo-Saxon side seems necessarily coincide with the start of the summer operating cycle to give to the U.R.S.S. that of strategic solidarity test for a long time and claimed to take the lead when the bulk of the German army will be fully engaged on the Eastern Front.

For this time it is to be considered less likely that the Anglo-Saxons can carry out a transfer of their forces from the N.A.F. theater of V. East to set up a major operation to invade Europe through the Balkan peninsula.

Each evaluation alternative in this regard, and for them *the next operating cycle* has not therefore now more reason to be: operations for the opening of the second front is to be considered

It can not be made that in the western Mediterranean basin.

Important diversionary actions may instead be carried out in the eastern Mediterranean.

5th) As part of the military situation in England has created the necessary security conditions, on the political level, to counter any possible German initiative in the Balkan area to the Middle East or the Iberian to Gibraltar.

Thus, in Turkey, the recent significant talks of Adana have ensured a stronger solidarity between the republic and the democratic powers. In Spain, with skillful political action and propaganda, the Anglo-Saxons have inanimate current spin, neutralized any ambition, action by the Nationalist Spain, created the preconditions for a first resistance against any possible German attempt.

The action 'policy undertaken in the Iberian Peninsula is indeed possible that has to come out in a bloodless American occupation of the Portuguese Atlantic islands, in order to better ensure the safety of the convoys started into the Mediterranean.

Instead it seems so could exclude action against Anglo Balearic islands for the air base closer to the coasts of the Mediterranean France (distance between Palma of Majorca and Toulon about 537 km).

Indeed:

-in the political framework violation of Spanish neutrality it would operate against Anglo-Saxon interests, both for the unfavorable repercussions among the Spanish-speaking peoples in Latin America and, in general, in all neutral countries, both for the possibility that they again raised Spain turbid ideological communist interior;

-in the military context, the violation itself would force the Anglo-Saxons to put Spain in the entire invasion budget, as Axis naval and air assets is certainly would envy on the Spanish coast, and could also justify the intervention of Italian-Germanic ground forces in Spain with Gibraltar as the goal.

Moreover, even occupied the Balearics. whose protection is two reinforced divisions, the strategic situation in the western Mediterranean basin would be to change them only partially in favor of the Anglo-Saxons as Sardinia and Corsica would be

always in a position to interfere directly on the invasion routes of southern France.

6) The opening of a second front in the Mediterranean basin constitutes, in preliminary line, the invasion of large Tyrrhenian islands to undermine those of our air and naval bases, in order to achieve the security of routes.

The next summer-autumn cycle, expected by the Anglo-Saxons; It could also be reflected in the achievement of the only insular objectives.

However, regardless from the time of implementation, the conquest of large Tyrrhenian islands, in the big picture of the war, now seems geared to the following strategic developments in Provence, more than in the Italian peninsula, in convergence with actions coming from the north (British Isles) .

The invasion, it is assumed in fact exceed the possibilities of the Anglo-Saxon forces at work located in the NAF, which is applied a strict rate of curtailment imposed by the strong defense made in Tunisian panicle from the Italian-German troops and by the very high risk of a irruption rampart in the islands.

The populations of the hostilities, the obstacle of the Apennines; the stop line of the Po, the Alps barrier. not in fact allow the Anglo-Saxon forces to readily search for decisive action to combat against German forces, on which the operating effort or will even be applied to meet the energetic demands of Russia and to bring a fatal blow to the opponent.

Italy's military potential could also be bent with massive aerial action enhancing the foundations of the great Tyrrhenian islands, while renouncing to a heavy and random burst into the peninsula.

7) The opening of a second front in Provence may appear designated on the availability and location of the mass of the imperial forces, now ready to be launched in the conflict.

In British metropolis are now located 70 divisions, including 9 armored (in addition to the units to defend the country), who have now reached a high level of organization and preparation.

This mass can not logically remain inert when, in the next summer cycle, on the battlefields of Europe will decide the fate of the war.

The limited availability of tonnage dictates the choice of the employment arena for these forces, imposing a theater of operations close (France) which, with the brevity of the routes, allows to multiply the frequency of use of the available tonnage, increasing substantially the overall capacity.

Action against France could be performance because:

- would reveal bases German Atlantic submarines, welding the fracture line that threat, viral direction screams and exceptionally delicate, the basis of Anglo-Saxon war potential;

- would address in a quirky sector the Germanic reserves, diverted from the Eastern Front;

- It -may be done in a secure environment aerial supremacy, for the proximity of the British air bases;

- confiscate from Germany. the valuable contribution of first the materials and of the French war industry;

- It would implement in a fully supportive environment for the deaf, tenacious hostility of the French people against the occupying army.

8) A invasion of the army of Eisenhower into Provence should be recognized as being a decisive operation invasion of France from the British Isles, namely in a wide strategic convergence - in the decisive round of the war - of all the Anglo-Saxon forces available, on the same theater of operations.

9) The German supreme command carefully contemplate this possibility and gives you credit. In recent times it has indeed done so:

- To further strengthen coastal defense and anti-aircraft of the French Atlantic coast, enforcing it with a large number of guns;

- To deploy in France the remains of twenty divisions, minimized during the Winter Campaign in Russia; All units currently

in course of recovery and leading to a total of 60 divisions (including a dozen armored and motorized) the great Germanic units available in France, of which only forty prompt employment;

- Encouraging, with the relay, the withdrawal from the French regions of men employed.

10) If the hypothesis outlined above were to be confirmed, it - as far as it concerns the Mediterranean basin - designates Sardinia and Corsica more than Sicily, the preliminary burst opponent with a time earlier and in a pre-eminence of strategic importance.

TO THE CHIEF OF THE G.S. GENERAL
TO THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR
TO THE CHIEF OF G.S. ARMY, ==AVIATION == NAVY
FOR THE COMANDO SUPREMO OF DEPTY CHIEF OF THE G.S.. GENERAL
TO THE LIEUTENANTS OF THE G.S.. FOR OPERATIONS == INTENDENTE
TO THE CHIEF OF 1st UNIT OF THE G.S.R.E.

6th ARMY COMMAND
Operations Office

SUBJECT: Memoirs on the defense of Sicily

P.M. 5 to 27 March 1943 -XXI

Map of Sicily: 100,000 and 1,500,000

TO ECC. GEN. OF THE CORPS. MARIO ARISIO
Commander of the XXI Corps.

P.M. 35

ECC. GEN. OF THE CORPS. CARLO ROSSI
Commander of the XVI Corps

P.M. 19

MEMORANDUM No. 5 S

A) In the current situation in the Mediterranean an attempt to massive landing in Sicily (accompanied by air drop also on site and subsidized by massive disturbances and disorientation type "*Commandos*" A bit everywhere), may be expected to attempt occupation:

1) of the western cusp, that is of interest to the coastal region from the field to that of Castellammare di Stabia (including);

2) on the south eastern cusp, that is of interest to the coastal region from Licata -Gela sector in Catania (included).

Complementary -Functions against the two mentioned just now assume possibility of a landing in the Agrigento area; which therefore it may be interested occurred in both eventualities.

Additional functions compared to the first potential, it can carry a landing in the Palermo area.

Additional functions compared to the second possibility and,

presumably, to opposing forces exerted against the Calabrian -Lucania coast can carry a landing in the Messina area.

-It Is finally possible that the enemy can simultaneously attempt massive landing in the one and the other coastal region of which the first and the second possibility, that is, undoubtedly tend to the north west from the south southeast at total occupation of the island (giving or not subsidiary to the attack in either field).

-It Is not always possible that the enemy can simultaneously attempt great landing actions in against Sardinia and Sicily (a subsidiary purpose or not, in the one and the other island).

In such an eventuality, it would find predictably affected the coastal region north-west of Sicily, namely the one that goes from Sciacca sector in Palermo (included).

B) In all of these eventualities land defense:

- *should* -in a first step - rely *exclusively* on the means already available on the island;

-*can* predict the influx of significant reinforcements from the peninsula, only a few days.

The defense can also count on the *naval* called aircraft assistance.

Naval -more sensitive when landings affect the Tyrrhenian basin, less if you take place primarily in the Sicilian channel -you essentially exert *indirectly* (insidious attacks against the escort and the enemy convoys; our support for the traffic from the Peninsula to the island).

Air assistance as well as exercise this *indirect* action, it will exert a *direct* coordinated with ground operations.

In any case, the present state of things, even calculating arts will meanwhile some reinforcement, we must realistically see that we will, with respect to the opponent forces and means, at fault:

-*of ground forces*, not so much in the quantitative sense, as in qualitative terms. In other words, we will be at a major disadvantage of armored vehicles, namely of those who now represent the key element of the ground fight;

-*of naval forces* (probably);

-*of Air Force* (In quantitative sense).

-These forecasts we need to do, and under which we must devise and prepare our static and mobile defense; if, in practice, the comparative situation will be more rosy, so much the better!

C) Having said that, I give the following guidelines:

I. TENTATIVE ATTEMPT AT LANDING FOR OCCUPATION OF THE WEST APEX OF THE ISLAND (from the Castellammare sector to that of Sciacca, included).

-the forces involved in coastal defense and elements, various reinforcements, already available to them, they resist in place *to the bitter end*.

-The "*Mobile groups*" involved in airports defense, or tactical groups reinforcement.

- The *tactical groups* involved in different strengths depending on the event listed below:

a) the forces in coastal defense *held*; tactical groups moved to support and help to repulse the enemy at sea;

b) coastal divisions *held substantially*, but could not prevent the penetration into the interior of small enemy columns: the " tactical groups " counter maneuver against them or, if that is impossible, barring their passage in the right locations in particular to defense A/T in the region between the coast and the barrier (upcoming sheet no. 6 of this S Command), while awaiting the intervention of other forces;

c) the forces in coastal defense are *substantially overcome and the enemy proceeds grounded inward*: the tactical groups bar the way to the enemy in places particularly suited to the defense A/T, and *there resist to the bitter end*, not failing, when possible, to counter maneuver. the opponent.

Must in any case remain there assured the possession of the barrier strip (cited sheet). And that is the alignment M. Cofano -M. Sparagio - M. Scorace - M. Grande - Salemi - S. Ninfa - Partanna - Ponella of Misilbesi - M. Ficuzza; extended in front of the north by M. Sparagio M. Inice - M. Bonifacio - M. Piera - M. Gradera -Pizzo Montanello, where the enemy had "took out" the coast in the Gulf of Castellammare.

- *The remaining mobile forces of C.A.*, and *Army reserve* intervene with the consequent mode to the local situation and to the general one of the Island.

II. ATTEMPT TO LAND INTERESTING THE SOUTH EASTERN APEX OF THE ISLAND (from the field of Licata - Gela to Catania included).

- *The coastal defense forces* and various reinforcing elements already at their disposal on site resist *to the bitter end*.

- The "*mobile groups*" intervene in defense of the airports or are employed in reinforcing the "*tactical groups*",

- The "*tactical groups*" are involved in the same forces indicated in paragraph a), b) and c) for the previous case.

In the event c) bear in mind the importance that the possession of the watershed of the Iblei and offshoots that they stand out, to stop and just can counter maneuver the enemy who tends towards the inside, "working" between the plain of Gela , that of Catania and that of Pachino.

Called watershed must be maintained and *defended at any cost*.

- The *remaining mobile forces of the Corps* and the *Army Reserve* to intervene with the criteria stated in the previous case.

III. ATTEMPT TO LANDING, TENTATIVE OR OTHER THEN OCCUPATION OF THE WEST AND SOUTH-EASTERN APEX OF THE ISLAND, TO ONE OR THE OTHER OF THEM, IN THE FIELD OF AGRIGENTO.

- *The forces in coastal defense* and the various elements of reinforcement, already available to them, they resist in place *to the bitter end*.

- The "*tactical group*" of Raffadali - Aragon - Favara (177th Bers. Regiment) Intervenes in analogy to what was said in the cases referred to in subparagraphs a) and b) of Chapter I, according to the orders of Commander XII Corps.

For the eventuality c) of the same the chief will this control with the reserve army.

In the latter case it will have to be maintained to the bitter end the possession of a blocking end positions identified from the heights of Cianciana -M. Giafaglione - Plateau Racalmuto - M. Pisciacane.

- For the competition of forces in *coastal defense* as not employed lateral areas, or neighboring "*mobile groups*" and "*tactical*" available, be decided by the commanders of the Corps.

IV. ATTEMPT OF LANDING, TENTATIVE IN ADDITION TO OCCUPATION OF APEX WEST ISLAND, THE PORT OF PALERMO.

-*The Coastal defense forces concerned* and the various reinforcing elements already available to them, they resist in place *to the bitter end*.

-A part of the mobile forces of the XII Corps and possibly the army reserve, will fulfill the tasks outlined for "*tactical groups*" in cases considered above.

In the event c) of Chapter I shall be taken to any case, the "land front" of Palermo.

- For the possible contribution of *forces in coastal defense* by lateral areas not used, the power to rule is the commander of the XX Corps,

V. TENTATIVE ATTEMPTS TO LANDING IN ADDITION TO OCCUPATION OF EASTERN APEX OF THE ISLAND, AND LUCANA-CALABRA COSTA (or to one of these regions), THE NAVAL BASE OF MESSINA.

- The *forces in coastal defense* and the various elements of reinforcement, already available to them, they resist in place *to the bitter end*.

- The tactical group of Linguaglossa and the "rapid core" Barcelona are coming to the defense of the base.

- Parts of the mobile forces of the XVI Corps., and possibly the army reserves, fulfill the duties outlined for the "*tactical groups*" in the event considered in Chapter I (p. 2 and 3). To be kept at all costs is the "land front" of Messina.

- For the possible intervention of forces in coastal defense from the side areas, not engaged, decide the commander of the XVI Corps.

VI. TENTATIVE ATTEMPT TO LANDING OCCUPATION OF THE ISLAND, ACTING TOGETHER AGAINST WEST AND SOUTH-EAST APEX.

It falls within the defense of the west, and in the case II for the defense of the south-eastern part.

VII. ATTEMPT TO LANDING IN SICILY - CONTEMPORARY A LANDING IN SARDINIA

It falls in the case I and, where appropriate, in addition to it, in case IV.

D) These defective are issued on the basis of hypotheses and rational sub-hypotheses, but from which the reality will deviate too greatly.

It is also possible that, while not departing from them, the individual events and - especially - the news that arrive to Corps commands and to the Army or in respect of the *hypotheses* and sub-hypotheses mentioned above, both against the three possibility of use of the " *tactical groups* " before taken in consideration, are uncertain and confused initially so as not to allow so easily to commands to orient themselves and to "see clearly" in the operational situation.

In these cases indeed considered commands, which are in place not only to prepare but above all to lead the defense, will give additional contingent rules.

Meanwhile, however, that all "speak the same language" and that all are prepared to take effective source to those who are certainly the most rational forecasts, it is *essential* that the switching elements (from coastal reserves to cover armed reserves) have instructions and orders in tune with the guidelines above, you keep focused and ready to run them, and said, "readiness", intellectual and material, it is frequently controlled in the exercises prescribed by my sheet 2 S.

E) As I said, and as I shall not tire of repeating, the predicted inferiority of means than the opponent, and the multiplicity of sectors which can be attacked or threatened at the same time, require to give my best to the settlement and *development* of the organization defensive.

This memo is strictly personal to the commanders of the Corps.
Please receipt.

THE GENERAL COMMANDER
F/to. Mario Roatta

MEETING AT PALAZZO VIDONI
May 2, 1943 –XXI

SUBJECT: Sicily.

Present

Excellency AMBROSIO

Excellency ROSI

Excellency ROATTA

Excellency RICCARDI

Excellency FOUGIER

Excellency ROSSI

Excellency SANSONETTI

Excellency SANTORO

General MACARIO

General RAVERA

General AME

General OF RAYMOND

Admiral de COURTEN

Admiral FERRERI

Colonel GALLO

Colonel MONTEZEMOLO

Etc. the Chief: As had occurred for the meeting on Sardinia, we should start with the examination of the enemy situation; however, not to repeat what has been said, I ask the General Amè to communicate separately to the commands affected the summary of information in our possession.

Therefore asks his Etc. Roatta to give us a framework of military efficiency of the island and the degree of preparation reached.

Etc. Roatta: I'll start by naval and air forces.

As for the contribution of ships, Supermarina reserved the right to determine what are the usable vessels. The issue will be defined; however, it is modest ships, with small radius of action and that can only be used for local actions.

More assistance in the defense is represented by barrages of mines, addition to existing ones I've asked others.

Etc. the Chief: It is very burdensome work?

Adm. De Courten: Illustrates a graph on which are represented the existing mine barriers and those to be established.

Etc. the Chief: Since the implementation will take time, it is an evaluation was made to the order of precedence?

Etc. Roatta: given priority to Gela and Catania. In most dangerous I evaluate effects the western cusp, but there are already other means. The air force under me has 60 aircraft. The mode of the assistance have already been studied for the nearby air force and has already done everything that can be done in advance.

The air force also include: the 2nd C.A.T. located between Sardinia and Calabria: the C.A.S. instead it's all in Sicily, less than some units that gives assistance to Tunisia and comprises 247 aircraft of which 182 fighter, 24 bombers, 13 torpedo bombers and 28 for aerial observation.

Of course, these figures represent the total aircraft: the efficient aircraft are far fewer.

These planes are located in the various fields of Sicily.

But I doubt that in case of an attempted landing in force would continue to operate. The defense is there and it is generally good, though, because of their location, many airfields are embedded on the line of containment cornerstones and therefore will be very subject to enemy attacks.

So I think you will have to rely heavily on the airfields of Sardinia and Calabria,

Etc. Fougier: For long-range actions have to rely on those of Puglia; It will be necessary to implement the operation of the airfields.

The essential thing is that they do not fall into the hands of the enemy, as, unlike what we saw in Sardinia, here is not essential to the enemy the possession of our airports, given the proximity of the African coast and the presence of Malta.

Etc. the Chief: And the airfield of Aspromonte?

Etc. Fougier: And still in the works.

Etc. Roatta: The German air force in their own airfields and airfields in mixed use with us. In total offers, including Sicily and Sardinia, of 381 aircraft: 135 bombers, 86 destroyers, 124 fighters, 36 exploration. They also have a reserve at Piacenza and at Grosseto.

Etc. Fougier: The figures are very fluctuating because the Germans maneuver means a lot more than ours do.

Etc. Roatta: In order to ensure the links you need a special telephone network. I asked the purpose G.S. for the means that in part I have already been granted.

I take this opportunity to ask his Exc. Fougier for a aircraft for my personal transportation,

Etc. Fougier: I have already arranged for the assignment of a "stork" aircraft.

Etc. Roatta: Regardless of the links already in place, it must at the appropriate time the air force commander is to reside near me.

For the maritime part of the Admiral Barone you need not be at my headquarters; However, we must replace the liaison officer that is not currently up to the task.

As for the land defense on 9 March I presented to the Army Chief of the G.S. a memorandum in which I formulated the demands of means I considered necessary to strengthen the defense. The G.S. acceded to my requests only in part for lack of means.

After the concessions made, the situation is as follows:

I. Strengthening of Sicily forces.

While the issues of the General control (military and civilian) and the equalization of benefits have been happily resolved among the various Armed Forces (Resolutions that benefit remarkably the preparation of his defense and to the morale of the troops), it could not provide a boost in very appreciably the forces of the island.

In fact, limiting ourselves to the most important items, as shown:

Item	Request	Assignments or Additions
Corps Artillery mobile	15 groups	6 bty. of 20
Real anti-ship artillery	8 batteries	3 bty. Type field
Coastal units and fixed airport defense.	45 Battalion. (Including 18 already announced, and 3 g. Already assigned team).	13
	22 cp. mtr. (Including 17 already assigned or announced).	11
Coastal units and fixed airport defense. Loose antitank pieces	7 cp. mortars 81	n.n.
		They are rated as 4 cp. 81, however, arise in the splitting of existing ones)
	20 cp. c.a. 47 (including 6 already announced).	3
	54 brt. the surface level (Including 24 previously announced).	31
	5 gr. For ground fronts	8 btr
	Transformation T.M. of Skoda groups	n.n.
	398 Pieces from 47 (including 25 already assigned).	74
	328 pieces to 75 (including 28 already assigned).	43
Troops maneuvering	140 pieces 100	n.n.
	1 armored div.	n.n.
		Asked the allies:
		-4 Battalion. carti
		-4 Gr. Propelled
		-4 Gr. art. T. M.
	3 Battalion. sappers.	n.n.
	2 Battalion. commercial code, from 47	n.n.
	8 cp. motorcyclists (already announced)	5 (Plus 3 possible assignment)
	8 cp armored cars	n.n.
	4 gr. Propelled by 75 or 90	The Battalion assigned. 47 self-propelled)

It notes that for some voices the latest assignments (subsequent to my requests, and occurred in far more pressing situation as before) are less than those already announced previously.

And it is to be noted that the assigned units - given the pace of Transpose - will be to work site who knows how soon, while on those just announced or requested at the German ones can not safely let alone next assignment.

However, the situation of forces that results is the following:

Artillery C. A Mobile:	Zero now: Just a little more than zero in the future
Artillery A. N. real (outside of major ports and squares m. m.):	Zero now Zero in the future coastal artillery densities (including batteries of ground level Type pitched: the battery for 10 km)
Coastal units:	Density of 26 people per kilometer currently, and 34 in the future. Resulting in inability to oversee all existing and garnish stations sufficiently the "ground fronts"
Loose pieces antitank:	Supposing all of the coastal band coverage, density of a piece for 6.5 km at present, and a piece for 2.2 km in the future. (Keep in mind also that the "Hunters' tanks are entirely devoid of a.c. bombs).
Troops maneuver:	In conditions, currently, to face modern armored vehicles: 3 groups of 90 self-propelled;

	<p>some German tanks (in transit); some sections from 88 German and, to a much lesser extent: 2-3 Propelled groups of 47; 3 battalions from 47 truck-mounted; artillery to T. M. divisional and C.d'A 75, 100 and 105. Not in good shape to meet modern armored vehicles: The remaining maneuvering troops (4 divisions); which, among other things, they are only partly motorized (by default vehicles) and risk - unless you provide urgently and radically - to remain barefoot after the first gear. For the future we do not dare forecast, given the uncertainty on outcome of requests addressed to the Allies.</p>
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II. *Strengthening of the defensive system.*

V.E. perfectly knows the situation of the defensive work of the "coastal band cover," and know that although they may be significant in relation to the limited means had available, are far from sufficient.

So much so that the G.S., circular glue 3200, ordered substantial completions of the works.

Likewise V.E. He knows that the backlogs, which I call the "barrier-bands" do not exist.

Faced with this state of affairs, and based on the existing orders in the way, I have formulated a program of work to be done, as the situation requires, in relatively short time, and I forwarded the corresponding staffing requirements, equipment and material.

Requests and assignments (essential items) for the completion of work on "coastal coverage range" are the following:

Assignments	requests or additions
2 miners battalions 6 companies artisans 16 centuries workers 160 metal turrets	n. n. 2 12 n.n. (36 turrets had already been assigned previously).
Thorny rope and accessories for 3,000 Km. Of cross-linked fence trapezoidal 800,000 tons concrete	It will be provided in relation to availability. Overall allocation (for all the defensive works) of the cement produced in the island (about 140,000 tons per month, assuming that it is always available with the coal needed). Less the requirements for the other F.F. AA. and for civilian shelters, monthly availability of approximately 100,000 tons. Promise to provide other 70,000 tons per month of the peninsula. Total: 170,000 tons month (for the whole - I repeat - of defensive works).
400,000 anti-tank mines (in total, ie for the whole defensive system)	assigned 160,000 (For the remaining was announced the completion of the request in three groups, by 31 August).
70,000 anti-personnel mines (in total, ie for the whole defensive system).	assigned 10,000 (For the rest, it was announced the completion by April).

For the work of "barrier-bands" I have not communicated requirements, but the broad outline of the work conducted to determine them *roughly equally*:

Thus we have:

Orders (and needs)	requests or additions
special work organization, such as "Presidio Monti" 15 companies (from the peninsula) of 1,000 workers each with its technical framework, and machinery. 1,700,000 tons (quintals) of cement	n.n. However, increased steering of military engineering personnel, and various measures, that will allow to do without a special request organization. insurmountable difficulty to assign. On the other hand, it would be exuberant to practically executable work (date of the cement deficiency). Allocation of 5,000 workers, no businesses, from May to June. No special assignment having to also ensure that these works with 170,000 tons the previous month in the table

Essentially (without getting on to ancillary requirements such as means of transport, etc.) It was to have:

- of 2,500,000 tons of cement;
- The "labor force" able to implement it in a time X. This time it was not specifically mentioned, nor could it be so; but it was highly desirable to be restricted.

Calculating three months, it is derived the total requirement of about 800,000 tons cement-month and a "workforce", recruited on the peninsula, 16 centuries, more than 15,000 workers framed in enterprise,

These figures may perhaps appear high in front of the quota to the availability and low consumption so far carried out in Sicily (500,000 tons cement), but they are small compared to what was employed (in part metallic materials) tract of equivalent of the "Atlantic Wall" and, represent, in my opinion, the minimum necessary to give the island's defense system adequate decently efficient means of opponents offense.

In particular, then, I refuse to believe that Italy, which has made colossal public works, is not able, in contingencies such as the current series, to arrange for Sicily a modest batch of 15,000 workers.

However, if the means are lacking, nothing to do but this deficiency does not authorize me to believe that if the Channel is necessary for the defense potential of 100, just for Sicily considerably below potential.

The enemy, in fact, is the same, and the rate of it will stick -if applicable - Sicily we will not use certain kindness to proportion its means of attachment to the efficiency of our defensive ambush.

It should thus be clear that if Sicily can only count on 170,000 tons of cement per month, instead of 800,000, the defensive ambush instead of being in place (not in too great a proportion expected) by July p .v., It will only for June 1944, and - similarly - at the end of the quarter in first half considered (late July 1943) the efficiency will pay 3 less than 1/4 of the programmed,

III. *Self-sufficiency:*

When I took the Army command (mid-February) I was told in Rome, the following:

a) through a series of measures in progress and to the study, it would be obviated the railway traffic jam then in place in Calabria, and you would be made to flow into Sicily you need for the necessary military consumption, and to complete - 31 March - the planned "military self-sufficiency" of two months (but excluding "poor materials").

b) secondary transport (steamships – landing craft) would allow to provide, in uncertain times, even for these "poor materials".

c) it would be provided per calendar account, a "self-sufficiency for the population, although it roughly two months, in time, not specified, but not much dissolved at that date of 31 March.

Quite apart from that date, it is not yet possible even for insurmountable causes, for fulfill the above, and in some field things have indeed worsened.

Do you see the chances of the situation of the best transport considerably.

This results in the possibility - very serious-that (in the case of the defense is compromised in efficacy or - how much less - in time by logistical deficiencies (military and civilian, or - for better offensive attacking and isolation from the transport side of Sicily to say - overall),

It is clear that if the Armed Forces, had, for example, food for 60 days, and the people alone for ten days, from the moment they cease the supply of the peninsula should be done, the balance of military and civilian availability, from which (also reducing to mimic the bourgeois rations), given the enormous disproportion between civilian and military, would be that the island could no longer live -and then defend -few days after the exhaustion of the original civil stocks.

Faced with such a possibility, though not being the issue of the responsibility of this transport control; I allow myself to insist on the need to absolutely extraordinary measures and especially radical.

Etc. the Chief: Keep in mind that the island have full powers and therefore also in the transport sector can provide in response to the needs.

Etc. Rotta: It will be done. I now expect the delegation to issue notices

Etc. the Chief: Even this thing will be defined as soon as possible,

Etc. Rotta:

IV. *The Enemy:*

The enemy, the theater that affects Sicily, air superiority. And there has -a part battleships and submarines - the naval superiority following the air superiority of the above, the availability of aircraft carriers and numerous cruisers and destroyers.

The enemy has finally, between French North Africa and Gibraltar, 850 special landing craft capable of carrying on one wave - according to S.I.E. - More than 1,000 armored vehicles and more than 30,000 men. While merchant ships, as of now, at his disposal in the western Mediterranean center, allowing the transport of different divisions and related supplies.

On the other hand, between the British and Americans, they exist in French North Africa 38 divisions, including seven armored divisions and three armored brigades.

Forces, therefore, exuberant to the needs of the Tunisian theater and that even if they were all employed in that arena, and any resulting hard you try, would always be sufficient largely to a subsequent large landing expedition to Sicily and elsewhere.

As to the moral efficiency, technical and material opposing units, or at least the British, even the last coastal infantryman knows by now, the recent report on the battle of Mareth, published in all the newspapers of the world, that the English 8th Army is the best in the world, which features materials and troops out of class and which is led by commanders say "elite", seconded by staffs who - always according to the report - would be of exceptional ability!

V. *Possibility of defense.*

To answer this question it is necessary to consider things very realistically:

A - Today, as before, those embarking on a landing operation acts big surprise (both in time and in space), it gives demonstrations, try diversionary landings, and directs the mass of one or more sections of favorable costs, such as the beach and as background.

The main lines of action of landing are therefore the same as those of any land offensive, and put forward, as in this last, to the fact that the attacker has, initially, on or on selected sections, the *superiority of forces* on the defender .

But, the operation mode of modern landing are (apart from aviation also, that exists between the two parties, in proportion as I suppose - for a moment -equivalence), very different from those of the past.

B - In the past those who attempt the landing aligned transport vessels at relatively short distance from the coast and intricately transshipped troops on barges, lighters and boats. These boats slowly reached the beach where, if all went well, set the foot infantry equipped at most of the classical " landing craft" driven by hand.

Artillery, vehicles, armored vehicles (when they exist) and the large supplies could not be landed at the same point (ie of open beach) but they required a port.

Therefore, the attacker was aimed, in the hours immediately after the landing, to take possession of a port, which he was to walk.

It followed:

for the attacker:

- exertion, or major efforts, directed to stretches of coast next to a port;
- Initial superiority of forces on the defense, as though diminished by:
- Huge vulnerability of transportation ships at anchor, and transshipment vessels;
- disembarkation, attack, formation of the "bridgehead", penetration and action for possession of a port *assigned to infantry alone*;
- Slowness of everything, and length of the ensuing period of crisis.

for the defender:

- localization of the spots on which the enemy would exercise stress or major efforts,
- Initial inferiority of forces than the aggressor, however, compensated by:
- Huge effectiveness of its focus on transport ships at anchor, or on transshipment vessels;
- immediate defense, next defense or counter maneuver conducted

(Until the enemy was not the master of a port!), *Only against infantry*;

-long time available, and consequent large possibility of bringing in, with good reason, their reserves.

It is true that the attacker could, originally, giving up possession of a port and aim to land on the beach also open the heavy material and supplies (Gallipoli case) but that did not change the situation much, because:

-like process required special conditions (depths, currents, protection from rough seas, etc.) which located it in almost the same extent features of the threat;

- are needed big works of pontoons or the like:

-the time available to the defense was even greater than in the ordinary case.

So landings of the past really were the most risky enterprise that could attempted, while the defender, although lower total of forces and even if only resting on the ground, had very great likelihood of materially prevent the landing, or to choke it off just made.

C - The rules for a modern landing are very different:

First, the attacker *being able to land on the open beach immediately* armored vehicles, artillery, vehicles, etc., Has no urgent need of a port.

The need is higher (large supply), *and the port not having to be reached on foot and alone infantry*, may be far from or stretches of beach on which the first landing takes place.

From that it follows that the "localization" of the features of the threat is much lower than in the previous case.

Non-alignment of transport ships occur a short distance from the coast, the transshipment of troops on smaller boats, and their slow approach to the beach; but instead it makes direct and speedy approach of special "landing craft" *armored and making fire*, who put on ground, the infantry and choreographic "landing pieces ", but the tanks, the armored car, and self-propelled artillery, subsidized by an formation of special infantry (type of sappers).

Therefore, the attacker is not subject at all to the friendly crisis (huge vulnerability - slowly - landing of only infantry), and performs since the aqueous phase - almost a substantially similar attack to the one that launched on dry land.

Subsequently the attacker - inherently, ie apart from the reaction of the defense - is in conditios:

- To penetrate quickly and powerfully, making even less - initially - a “remains of landing”:

- To aim at the port that needs, or any other goal, quickly and powerfully, and even with wide circles.

It should be added that the boat landing operation is normally accompanied, today, by air landing or dropped by parachute, a circumstance that forces the defender to special internal defense sites, contributing to hinder his timely guidance, and binds at least part of its reserves.

So on the whole, the landing operation is much less risky than before, and much less easy are the muster and the reaction.

D - *That being the case*, to oppose victoriously to a large landing action, the defense must be found in the following conditions:

- 1) -To prevent materially landing, the defense must have on the beach, or immediately behind, and until the first onset of the attack, such a quantity of artillery and automatic weapons and accompaniment, and so protected from offense airline and from that ship, you can sink your enemies means landing or force them to turn around.

In other words: *the defense must have almost the density and texture of a land front.*

In this condition, except when you are to have colossal resources, no coastal defense responds; which is why the attacker usually manages to set foot on the ground: as the same case of Dieppe.

- 2) -*For containing the landed opponent*, the defense must have, where it intends to contain it, such a complex of obstacles, and of the various forces (already in place or quickly noticed) by armored force the opponent to mark time , at least for the time necessary to the influx of reserves.

- 3) -*To destroy, capture and drive out the enemy landing in the sea*, and content or not, the defense must have mobile reserves such as quantities and especially as a quantity, it flow in from the defensive fronts and in assistance with the troops manning or acting in the open field and by themselves, go

have the overall superiority (or even if not numerical) on enemy armored stationary or moving.

That if the reserves in question are such that they can not, even with skillful and impetuous maneuvers, achieve this superiority, there is no other solution but to form a stop in front waiting for more favorable eventuality.

Moreover, generally accepted that the attacker is able to set foot on the ground, the next fight that takes place but near the sea but that takes place on land, is more or less the same that takes place in any terrestrial theater permeable to armored vehicles.

(More or less, because who has landed is for a time at least locked up in a narrow field, and is still linked to subsequent landings, which benefits the defense).

But, apart from that, if Russia or in North Africa, to stop or destroy an armored opponent, were indispensable obstacles, fortifications, of antitank weapons and armored vehicles, there is no reason at all that the same results, in front of an armored opponent coming from the sea, can be achieved without the means referred to above, or with a minimum proportion of them.

E - Moving from the general to the particular field of Sicily, excel findings that the opponent is very largely equipped with armored units and special landing craft, and that many stretches of the island lend themselves physically - as a beach as background - landing and the penetration of armored vehicles.

Coastal defense (sparse - no anti-ship artillery and anti-aircraft artillery - very little of their reinforcements and artillery counter-wagon - leaning against defensive works to be completed) is in no position (common fact - I repeat - to almost all defenses) to prevent the landing, but is only an extent to hinder - to delay it, and hold for a more or less a long time the landed opponent.

Given the above efficiency conditions, and given that only small mobile units can move quickly, it is likely that said containment, rather than immediately behind the coast, you make a little back, over an irregular line and not be determined a priori, resulting from the surviving elements of the coastal troops and by the action of the first mobile tributaries troops.

However, that wherever the enemy is stopped, the cases rationally to consider are two:

1) - The overall circumstances allow immediate rescue or - at least - wait in place the influx of other sufficient mobile forces (arrive, it should remember him, partly on foot and from a distance);

2) - or the overall circumstances are such that they can not wait on the said inflow spot.

In the first case, or immediately, or as soon as sufficient reinforcements arrived, you could spend your opponent (action which - by the way - we are fully oriented and tend) counterattack with chances to drive out to the sea.

In the second case, ie one in which the opponent is able to overcome the temporary containment line, and *to spread with his armored units in the open field*, it would be very bad to deal with it on the spot with mobile reinforcements later arrive (remarkable diversity of speed), and *almost totally unfit to compete against armored vehicles*. A similar process would lead in fact to get beat and in detail.

This place, *also in the event in question*, it would not be advisable, but necessary to wait for the enemy wherever the ground, properly placed, *allows to compensate* for his wealth of similar media and artillery against the tanks.

And in that area (corresponding to the "barrier strip") that you might, even with strength and with considerably less means, stop the opponent who had not been able to contain or "maneuvering" below.

And it is from this area that have appeared necessary armored reinforcements, or at least the situation allowing it, would start the fightback big.

This and nothing else, and as long as the situation does not change, *it's the truth*.

F -In this condition assume very special importance the barrier works. About them the General Staff in his paper 12114 of April 14, in summary says:

-The first task of defense is to prevent the landing and choke it off certainly in the bud;

-the forces available to the defense are what they are, and will remain so substantially;

- the means for the defensive system are, and will remain scarce;

- the one and the others are too small to be divided among the forwards backwards;
- So no force must be subtracted from the coastal defense, no mobile force must be bound to the arrangement, defensive back, and no work means must be employed if antimatter that this -you would delay the completion of the advanced works.

Given that:

- I have given such importance to the completion of the advanced work to ask for them -to employ them in a short time - 800,000 tons cement;
- which I never thought of taking people away from the coastal defense. so much so that I asked for it the reinforcement of forty Battalion, and several other units;
- which I never planned day establish a priori and permanently mobile forces on backlogs;
- I consider essential that in correspondence of the area where the soil is no longer permeable to tanks, or it is little, are built of the work that serve to:
 - preclude the immediate penetration of enemy columns, eventually managed to break suddenly defenses advance;
 - enable mobile troops that occurred unnecessarily later, or they came in the area when we were about to reach the opponent, to contain it (*compensating, with the ground and with the work, the inferiority of forces, or at least of means*);
 - establish, in the same case, the basis for the offensive play.

It is only when I arrange impressive armored reserves that I would feel to give up completely the barrier works (which were in fact already been ordered by G.S..

CONCLUSION:

- The March 9 I set out my thoughts on what is necessary to suitably strengthen the defense of Sicily.

- V.E. (And me and my troops we are very grateful) it has worked because it had acceded to some important of these requests. But, for the need of things it has reported that for many other (essentially as regards the forces and defensive means) is not possible to accommodate us that a very limited extent.

- I have fulfilled what I consider my duty, that I stated that the scheme is insufficient for this purpose, and I explained my

judgment as to what you can do or not do with forces and with the means available.

- After that, except for need contingents I will not ask anything and I will not do more appreciation.

V.E. He knows the situation and, therefore, when and how will pose will meet us to enable us to fulfill our task as well as possible.

For our part, we will meet serenely and with great decision, whatever the forces and means at their disposal, and whatever the situation.

Etc. the Chief: His Etc. exposure. Roatta has made it clear the possibilities of defense; it was based on a realistic view of the situation and it is good that it was so because you might think that the means we need to oppose the enemy.

Unfortunately, the biggest part of the requests made for the first defense of the island you can not meet.

But it can also work in the field of training and for preparing.

To complete the picture now please Etc. Roatta to give us a few words about the problem of evacuation.

Etc. Roatta: In the past, I had expressed a desire to evacuate the island both for logistical reasons, and for reasons of order.

To avoid movements that disturb the order I have already prepared an order because, in case of an operating alarm, each one remains in its place.

It should evacuate 200,000 people on the peninsula at the rate of 5,000 a day and 100,000 should be sent inland. But in the inner centers you can not send a lot of people because there is no shortage of local, say water and the sanitary conditions are not good.

Transporting 5,000 people a day in the continent would be possible because daily ferries leave empty.

However, a difficulty can not be displaced bodied men to work and so you have to think of old men, women and children, but to do that it comes up against the indivisibility of the family feeling, feeling deeply rooted in Sicilian.

It will do what you can; But I ask that you do not ask me programs and you just give me the possibility of means, leaving leeway.

Etc. the Chief: I understand these difficulties; the displacement will not be constricting and Sicily Command will have complete freedom of action.

Etc. Roatta: About internal transport observe that so far there were two organs that ill accorded with each other.

Etc. the Chief: It was abolished by a decree signed yesterday, the Trevisani Office.

Etc. Roatta: So rule out difficulty in domestic transport. What is interesting is that the supplies come into the island; for transport within us we provide.

Etc. the Chief: What German troops may order to Sicily?

Etc. Roatta: In total, around 7,400 men divided into battle groups. These are infantry that have also included big rifles and antitank pieces. Then there are 26 pieces of mobile 88 pieces, 31 pieces of 20 and 10 tanks.

A portion of the infantry (about one third) is motorized.

In the complex are good and do only a few days of sunshine exercise Italian troops (I limit the exercises of Italian troops to the worrying situation of the footwear).

About the Germans I would point out two facts that have harmful repercussions: the very high terms that they correspond to manpower and the fact that it has recruited a number of women for field services.

Etc. the Chief: You have full power and you can have as a result. Please now Exc. Riccardi to examine the problem in the naval aspect.

Etc. Riccardi: Here the problem is completely different from what looked to Sardinia.

A prominent factor is the enemy air domain that we must provide more and more.

The intervention of the naval force so it is very difficult and must be studied in relation to the opportunity to defend from the air attack.

The situation in Tunisia has the immediate impact because the possibilities vary depending on whether the ports of Bizerte and Tunis are in our hand or the opponent.

The distance ratio is such that the enemy can act with a huge number of small means,

Such as naval forces will use the enemy to protect these media? I believe that any act directed only against Sicily not

for action by the battleships. There may be the DD. In fact, the protection can be made only with air power. As for our naval forces we have already examined by treating of Sardinia. The forces which then has talked represent everything we have and I do not think you need to move as long as there is the potential threat to Sardinia.

Basically we do not see the use of our battleships against enemy DD in a completely dominated by aviation enemy zone and therefore does not consider possible conflict with naval surface vessels.

Etc. the Chief: If the first phase is not any contrast can be taken into account that following the enemy will need supply.

Etc. Riccardi: Then you have a time frame that will allow us to make arrangements belonging to the situation that will be created.

Etc. the Chief: We now examine the possibility of Aviation.

Here Fougier: The Sicilian Aviation makes the system with that of Sardinia, on the peninsula, Tunisia, which can be projected to Sicily in case of need. In essence can not be determined a priori air forces available for Sicily: will be all unless there is some other sectors threatened, if not there will be a rate more or less strong.

However the situation of Sicily logistics fields is reassuring because it allows you to accommodate the forces that can exert an effective contrast or if this does not intervene:

- The enemy occupation of some of our airfields, this very serious circumstance that would lead the opponent to a local superior may not be recoverable
- Without use of the Sicilian airports.

However I think that the enemy does not attempt a landing in Sicily; that Tunisia and Sardinia are in our possession and consider Sicily as well subject to Tunisia and Sicily to Sardinia that an operation can be performed only at a later time. In fact, the air action from Sardinia is a very serious threat to the enemy.

Etc. the Chief: We have now moved to the strategic problem, and in this vision we are in agreement.

Etc. Fougier: If the question were limited only to Sicily I can say that our air force, given the chance to do mass, are considerable, and in fact are the local forces of Sicily itself is remarkable.

In summary we have the ability to counter the landing effectively. I can not give figures on the forces because they are subject to continuous variations.

Etc. the Chief: We rely heavily on the Air assistance. You have to worry about the defense of airports and please note in this regard that there are fields near the coast that can be also achieved by armored vehicles, and for this we must think of the anti-tank defense.

Etc. Roatta: Our allies know well our situation. Action against the big land we can only make an honorable resistance, but we do not have the ability to repel the enemy.

Since this is no wonder why the ally you do not think to give us the means to strengthen the defense.

Etc. the Chief: The problem has been treated unsuccessfully in the Salzburg talks and this state of affairs is part of the euphoria that is considered offensive in Russia yet profitable.

Etc. Riccardi: I must draw attention to the situation of the Pelagie islands and Pantelleria, in respect of the forces that becomes more and more difficult. I think approaching the time to provide for the displacement, Lampedusa has 5000 inhabitants: Pantelleria 13,000.

Etc. the Chief: We should ensure self-sufficiency.

Etc. Rosi: Evacuation presents many dangers.

Etc. Fougier: We agreed on the need to consider the airfields as head balances. To strengthen the defense I think whether it is expedient to prepare the mine fields. In this way I could put at the disposal of bombs to be used, with appropriate modifications to the fuse, like mine.

Etc. the Chief: The idea is good, is something that will have to be studied. General Di Raimondo we speak now of the transport situation in Sicily.

Gen. Raimondo: At 170,000 ton of monthly requirement we deliver only 147,000 last month,

In demand of 170,000 tons are included:

- 60,000 tons of coal (essential for railways and industries of the island);
- 36,000 tons for Germanic armed forces;
- 26,000 tons for national armed forces;
- 35,000 tons for Corsicilia;
- 12,000 tons for cement;

Of 147,000 tons. transported 105 went by rail and the rest by sea.

We rely on 300 cars per day but in fact pass 230 cars and the rest is provided with motor-sailing and landing craft.

Keep in mind that in case of attempt to land are very exposed to enemy air attack the railroad points of Palermo.

Messina and Catania and a service interruption will have major repercussions.

Etc. the Chief: They have been re-establish communications with Palermo?

Gen. Raimondo: For now, the potential is only 60-70 cars a day. The situation is serious if present will be hit Messina. For maritime transport then we have considerable difficulty absorption by ports of Sicily.

The Palermo capacity is now minimal.

Etc. Roatta: For surely I will command laborers. While continuing to this- rate of transport deficit of Sicily you can only increase.

Etc. Sansonetti: If it were to cease Tunisia then you would need as much of the vessel and all parties would be available.

Gen. Raimondo: Compared to the current potential of the Sicilian ports the ships are there.

Etc. Roatta: What is interesting is that the supplies arrive. I will see to the off loading them is made. But before you start stuff to Sicily there must be approval for the inflow.

Gen. Raimondo: Another important issue is related to the penetration of rail movements between the peninsula and Sicily. Since the railway point of view, Sicily can not be considered completely isolated.

Etc. the Chief: The problem

deepened with the Upper Transport Directorate, bearing in mind that his Etc. Roatta the island has the widest powers.

The strengthening of the defense of the island will be continued briskly.

This report was handed to me by the Army on 26 or 27 May 1943 when I was assigned to the Command of the Arm Forces of Sicily.

Rome this May 9, 1957

F/to General Alfredo Guzzoni

Appendix no. 4

ARMED FORCES COMMAND SICILY
Operations Office

No. 14600 op.

P.M. ., -14 June 1943-XXI

SUBJECT: defensive situation of Sicily.
TO THE GENERAL STAFF ROYAL ARMY
Operations office and, for information:

P.M. 9

TO THE SUPREME COMMAND

P.M. 21

TO THE COMMAND ARMEY GROUP SOUTH

P.M. 25

I have refrained so far from representing the military situation and island policy as to not to repeat things already known in this G. S. latter but especially have first my personal feeling to be exhibited.

MILITARY SITUATION

The memories of my predecessor Etc. Roatta n. 3 S. and n. S. 10 respectively on March 9 and April 30 represents a whole and in every detail, the coastal defense structure, both one of the airports, and a deployment of mobile units.

a) *About the coastal defense* posture since then very little has progressed. Completion of some work of little consistency, construction of some other work particularly anti-tank; but in the complex works not such as to mark a significant improvement in the defensive system.

However, remains unchanged inefficiency of men and suitable weapons to oppose attempts of landing.

The coastal battalions were formed by soldiers of elderly classes and often poorly commanded, anybody of which must be vigilant and defend coastlines even 45 Km.: (eg. The 435th Coastal Battalion).

In the best case (ie that of the 388th Battalion) The extension of the coast watch and defend is 10 km away.

Many of the coastal battalions consist of island elements that affected by the moral state of the local population.

Frequent departures to meet the family although you may abound in the granting of regulatory approvals.

About the prevalent weapons to defend the coast submachine guns and machine guns, totally lacking anti-ship artillery and lack other artillery especially those antitank. This last one has a piece, say a piece for every 8 km, And a landing would essentially attempted with a prevalence of tanks.

b) The work of the barrier band has just started; They are moved anyway troops to guard the same band for its efficiency.

c) About the defense sets of airports, integrated by anti-parachutist nuclei and mobile motorized nuclei (which may also have reactive action on coastlines) it was made between what can, It is units, speak of the defense sets of airports, that under severe aerial bombardment did not let themselves be carried away by the panic that had taken neighboring units (as in Palermo, Caslelvetrano) but have remained steadfast in their place of combat.

However, it is to consider the significant number of divisions of Airborne which the enemy has.

d) For mobile defense XII Corps. as we know, has two infantry divisions (the "Assietta" and the "Aosta" one of which (the "Aosta" consists almost entirely of Sicilian elements.

The XVI Corps has only one division (the "Napoli") it consists almost entirely of pure islanders elements.

The Army Command has in reserve the "Livorno" division and the German division "Sizilien" But the first is to project towards the XVI Corps and, it can be said, at the disposal of the latter, while the "Sizilien" has a projected core westward, another to the east and a central core in the area of S. Cataldo, Caltanissetta, which is, up to now, the true only of the Army reserve.

These forces, firmly committing themselves, certainly succeed in containing and to repulse the first enemy units that they could disembark. But in all likelihood will be other

moving troops to replace the raw materials and to contain and repel the remaining attack which the enemy does not readily desist, accompanied by strong air actions.

And therefore, in addition to request any of the units, especially artillery A/T., trucks etc. requested by my predecessor, I feel obliged to request that the German division "*Hermann Goering*" is immediately transported to Sicily.

This essentially to have tanks.

And also you need an Italian motorized division.

e) Relations with German commands impress the most of camaraderie; they acceded to my demands, especially regarding the use of the division, "*Sizilien*" with perfect understanding of operational needs.

Before closing this brief outline of the military situation touch the issue of the rail service and the transport of supplies from the mainland.

It requires vehicles to facilitate supplies, to give the Civil high commissioner can provide food of the population at this critical moment of welding finally to transport infantry troops. This transport is needed to ensure the readiness of their use, to save labor, to keep up the moral before the fight.

Sending trucks instead of truck is an illusory advantage, because the former can only be advantageously employed on coastal rail vehicles, not in the streets of that for curves, gradients, width of the roadway and maintenance, damage already strong concerns in the case of urgent and prompt movement of troops.

I reduced the rail service to a minimum, putting in strong suffering the need of the population. But I could not use up the small supply of existing coal, what must be reserved for military transport need in an emergency.

But as soon as the situation improves a couples of coal trains will meet the needs of the population.

The supplies from the mainland go wrong: the ferry destroyed and damaged by enemy air raids did not work for several days. For two days one works.

You do not have motor-sailing vessels or landing craft in enough numbers.

The ports that could unload ship are empty and inactive for lack of laborers for in coming steamers.

The amount of materials required and foodstuffs to the armed forces and to the Island population is estimated at 8,000 tons daily.

I think that this figure is likely to decrease as many things you have to give. But the current daily unloading of 1500 - 2000 tons is too far from the minimum that should be considered essential to not waste overly much now the availability of the island, especially in view of other bombings and other things, maybe more, transport crisis from the Calabrian coast to the Sicilian.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Never before in Sicily they are intimately connected today the military situation and the political situation and must therefore be considered together for a full assessment of the Isle of resistance forces in the face of intensified air insults and attempts of the enemy landing craft that can not be excluded in short occurrence.

The population is, overall, of depressed morale. The more remote causes that may have acted so depressing morale of the people have been added, decisively, the deficient power and aerial bombardment.

The pride of the Sicilian population and little nothing remained.

It has resigned, agnostic, no reactivity.

He mentions only in passing the ill-concealed resentment in the measures that have shown no confidence in the feelings of Italian of the Sicilian people. The offense has been exaggerated by the intellectuals or semi-intellectuals, aristocrats, landowners, etc .; It may not have been felt by the people except through the popular action contrary to the class that has always remained in contact with the people, dominating despite the efforts made by the Regime organizations.

Most of all, however, to depress the Sicilian people intervened at first insufficient power. The membership has never worked, because if when operated at a time of severe crisis transport requires huge efforts of the Civil Commissioner and provincial organizations.

For months and months the population remained without pasta, no sugar, no oil. It receives only now part of the assignments in arrears.

Even the least well-off had to resort to the black market, to live badly.

The clerk honest had to muster the modest savings and cover themselves in debt, in order to live.

The hoarding and speculation have expanded to the detriment of all, by subtracting the masses as it had to be guaranteed to the population through the membership.

Black poverty, poor living conditions that have an impact on the physical island people and consequently on his morality.

The recent orders of the Civil Commissioner have resulted in many an awakening of hope.

Not everyone, however, because many hear the propaganda against it that makes them suspicious in the face of promises and sustainable conservation of them.

In order to reach the people in a tangible way the improvements still need to be given time, it should also be an organization designed to prevent and stamp out speculation and hoarding.

Things easy to say but difficult to be implemented.

It is a struggle that is open and being fought to restore confidence to the people.

But less effective since it can now say the action that takes place to hearten the people terrified by the bombings.

The enemy air offensive has mainly hit the most populous and wealthy coastal towns resulting in the displacement of the population towards the interior where living conditions are much worse.

This resulted exacerbate the food crisis shelter for most of the displaced have-nots, indecent and unsanitary, violent rupture of unity family so felt by Sicilian. To this is added the water crisis in many towns.

While in the past all this might have led to a spiritual reaction against the enemy and a strong will to resist, now it seems to achieve the opposite results.

The depression increases and with it the feeling is spreading that "you end up in any way as long as you finish." There are even those who think that Libya "is finally quiet."

Faced with the aerial bombardment the population feels helpless; the powerful and numerous masses say no enemy aircraft believed to be

Our air forces opposing adequate; Libya, Tunisia, Pantelleria, Lampedusa are names and events that shake his confidence.

The clergy does not carry out work contrary; but it does not carry out work intended to shake the apathy of the Sicilian people. He exhorts him to resignation, to trust in God. Etc.. He is working for himself, not for Italy and the defense of the Island.

I believe that, if needed, the Italian sentiment now will awaken dormant. In this immediate wake endeavor both the civil and military authorities. Sicilian fascist elements of pure faith who are best placed to penetrate the heart of these populations.

I have dwelt to consider the political situation for two reasons: first, because a remarkable part of the armed forces consists of Sicilian element that can not remain untouched by the moral state of the mass of the population; secondly because the enormous mass of the population thickened mostly in the hinterland of the coastal zone now being cleared from the Island without the possibility sensitive number, nor to be cleared more inward, will perhaps be in combat area, hampering the operations and making it more difficult that are not already, the movements along the rail vehicles.

* * *

After what I have said it seems that the military situation can only be improved now with the following measures:

a) enhancement of our air force with every effort, in order to neutralize the enemy air superiority that wipe out both defensive What to do, is the use of fixed or mobile nuclei in defense of airports and undermine the very effective use of mobile divisions;

b) the increasing use of mobile troops; as I said, it takes at least a German armored division and an Italian motorized division to last in the fight if the enemy or with naval landings or air landings could put a foot on the island. There is no doubt that the officers and troops of the armed forces, United in one bundle, will do their duty to the last in defense of this very Italian land.

The fascists of the armed forces it joins that of hierarchies and of the Party organizations. I am committed to ensure that even the mass of the population is alert and also joining it in -common effort bears to the Armed Forces its contribution of faith and strength.

This sheet answers in more detail to the request made by the Supreme Command by telex No. 14461 op. the 13th current.

THE GENERAL COMMANDER
F/to Alfredo Guzzoni

THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF
ARMED FORCES OF SICILY
F/to Emilio Faldella

GENERAL STAFF R. ARMY
Office of the Chief of the G. S.

SECRET-RESTRICTED

13 C.S.M.

P.M. 9, on 19 June 1943 XXI

To the G. U. commanders and the regiment or the corresponding entity
(Issued directly by G. S. R. E)

SUBJECT: Moral steadfastness.

I - Yes I have news that the recent war events and the enemy air offense intensification would have adverse effect on the spirit of some cadres.

II - If so, it is essential to react immediately and energetically to this phenomenon, which - if not eliminated - could have depressing effects on troops and on populations.

III - The commanders the G.U. and bodies speak frequently, every opportunity, to officers and units, telling them:

a) in any war, the initiative of operations switch between the contenders, to stay - finally and victoriously - in the hands of the one among them who has the right nerves;

b) in this period we are forced by circumstances to an essentially defensive. However, we are fully able, keeping calm and confidence, and with a minimum of the guts, to cope successfully with any opponent attack;

c) this place, and since we now - for the first time in this war - it comes to defending the sacred soil of the homeland, it must be prepared with a feverish passion to the test, perfecting morally, technically and materially the defense.

And in the hour of temptation, it is essential that everyone, at the top and at the bottom, "tied teeth," and fulfilled his duty, with fierce decision;

e) doing so unequivocally demonstrate to the enemy the inviolability of "fortress Europe" - become discouraged opponents-already known to be divided between them, interest and intent -

we will resume the initiative of - turn it upside down the operations, as in 1917-18, the situation - we reach Victoria.

IV -To called propaganda must couple work "manufacture" more complex, including:

-Example of the leaders;

-assistance continuous and loving;

-life in common (real, not "on paper") among officers and men of the offices operating or deployed;

-Form and attitude in the units and in the individual, always decent and dignified;

- human discipline and understanding, but inflexible in substance.

V -I am absolutely convinced that the masses of cadres and followers, which is 'healthy', will turn now and then to their duty.

The rate of emotional, uncertain, or cowardly, that - as in any mass -can exist even in the army, must be followed, edited and regenerated.

But since, at some point, the gangrenous parts amputate, any irreducible must be made out.

VI. If-then, in front of the enemy, some poor wretch to mouth off manifestations of indiscipline, of weakness, of defeatism or disorder, the commander of the unit will put him definitely against the wall.

This is not advice, but rather a precise order.

THE CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF
(Roatta)

Appendix no. 6

CONFIDENTIAL TO THE PERSONNEL

ARMED FORCES SICILY COMMAND
Operations office

18/S

Defense of Sicily

P.M. 5.27 June 1943

TO HIS EXCELLENCY COMMANDER OF XII C.A.
TO HIS EXCELLENCY COMMANDER OF XVI C.A.
TO THE M. M. COMMANDER AUTON OF SICILY
TO THE AERONAUTICA COMMANDER SICILY
TO THE FF.AA. ARTILLERY COMMANDER, SICILY
TO THE FF.AA. ENGINEERS COMMANDER SICILY
TO THE FF.AA. COMMANDER CC.RR. OF SICILY
TO THE LIEUTENANT GENERAL DI COLLEG.

P.M. 35
P.M. 19
MESSINA
P.M. 3500
SEDE
SEDE
SEDE

FOR M.V.S.N.

SEDE
P.M. 3500
P.M. 205
P.M. 3550

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE COURT OF WAR
TO THE GENERAL INTENDENTE FF.AA. SICILY
AT THE GENERAL COMMANDER DIFTER SICILY

The enemy, by means of the newspapers, told the world:

-that the occupation of the island of Pantelleria was so easy that its success should not be taken as the basis for future operations of the same kind';

-that the island defend itself "has not been determined and the garrison has no defense."

I do not think at all that this is true. But these comments of the enemy, certainly biased, they give me reason to draw the attention of Your Excellencies commanders C. A., the commanders of the Navy, Air Force and all the other officers address the following points:

a) Confidence in the demeanor of troops, new combat aircraft and the naval bombardment as ours, should not be blind; but very alert. Show confidence is necessary for obvious

moral reasons. But at the same time it is also a duty on the part of the higher commanders envisage for themselves some doubt unfold waves of officers and troops timely moral action and coercive maintain maximum vigor and inflexibility.

And if this moral action was not enough, it does not delay to intervene with extreme severity, including through the use of arms.

In no case has tolerated the abandonment of the place of their combat. The culprit is not given to long ordinary criminal process which, if it meets the needs of normal conditions, can not effectively imminence or during battles. For example, immediate and advise, that in such a contingency is to be achieved, it takes extraordinary and rapid procedures.

b) In our situation is not to be excluded, rather it is to be expected, it is impossible to remove from the battlefield the civilian population, which therefore will to be directly involved in the fighting events.

This is serious for the repercussions that such a delicate environment can bring in the soul of our fighter, especially Sicilian.

Repercussions that will listen to delay in the use of weapons, not to hit the enemy even with the population, the desire to give up the fight or even to move in the opposing camp, with the hope of being able to more effectively protect their loved ones and their own interests.

This is a very serious and delicate aspect of a situation that could be created and, as such, should be considered to avoid surprises in the behavior of our junior officer and his soldiers.

Perhaps the enemy to rely on this.

In this painful juncture it is therefore inescapable duty of everyone to silence every feeling of fraternity that, faced with the supreme interests of the country, would be a betrayal.

Of course, every commander, from the highest to the modest, should take all appropriate measures to ensure that both our nations, spared any unnecessary loss. But where is the enemy to beat, there you shoot even if this can be dangerous and cause harm to civilians. To think otherwise would be to betray our hard accurate delivery.

Each within his jurisdiction meets in

full and precautions to be taken in favor of the population, and every act or any order that would take or give as an exception to the concept expressed above.

Any orders to desist from the fight to save the civilian population under my responsibility; and assessing the opportunities of them no one can supersede.

c) The concept of purpose must also be applied to the evacuation of the population from roads or vehicles or beasts of civilians. The total clearing of the roads should be maintained at any cost to ensure smooth traffic of troops and services, particularly in the course of operations.

To the Germanic divisions I assigned CC. RR. nuclei flaws that task, and possibly other more energetic and painful hard, are presented in detail from ourselves instead of by the allies.

As I said, our tasks are extremely delicate and in some cases may become very hard, because of the inevitable involvement of the population in the vicissitudes of the struggle.

I am sure that these my explanations will be to intensify our preparation, our vigilant work in all fields and all aspects that the fight will take in defense of our land.

* * *

This sheet will NOT be reproduced or made known in its integrity. The LL.EE. and Messrs General to whom it is addressed verbally lead them aware of their employees, so that everyone knows what my intentions and what their duties.

THE GENERAL COMMANDER
F/to Alfredo Guzzoni

P.C.C.
OF THE COLONEL G.S. CHIEF
S.M. HIGHER
(E. Faldella)

MEETING AT EXCELLENCY GUZZONI

Mar. Kesselring -Gen. Muller -Gen. Rodt -Gen. Senger - Col. Faidella.

June 26, 1943 -at 11:20

Kess. Gen. Senger has to be the liaison officer between us and the German divisions.

He spoke with Exc. Roatta about additions and has been established as a fixed point that the command at his Exc. Guzzoni.

It seems that there are officers who have the impression that German officials want to control, if there was this impression wish to remove it completely.

On the other hand, the Field Marshal as the other officers have been ordered to be present at the Italian commands the German ideas for a better use of German troops. Since now there will be general in the immediate vicinity he can clarify the German point of view.

He has learned that Gen. Guzzoni determined the location of troops. It allows to expose his opinion that is not a criticism.

The Field Marshal, on the basis of experience (Tunisia etc.), Believes that one can not think of a serious resistance if you do not have the bomb-proof shelters coast.

Secondly it comes to pushing forward the defensive line and bring our forces so far forward to fight back when the enemy has just set foot on land.

As official of aviation should tell immense danger that runs for enemy airstrikes. He performed reconnaissance, saw the conditions of the roads and had unpleasant impression that moving troops from the inside to the coast you will suffer heavy losses. Therefore it is of the opinion that our troops should be stationed at the edge of the mountainous area to intervene in the coastal strip in the shortest possible time.

How aviator and tactician thinks that that you can not gloss over this fact.

Another issue concerns the inside of so mountainous territory: the movements are limited to a few streets that are favorable targets for enemy aircraft. It fears that the reserves that must be put in motion can not be carried out in good conditions in the employment areas.

To avoid this danger has mandated that in the most threatened areas (Catania, Trapani) ensure more air cover, but the enemy bombers will always be many that there would always that danger.

It adds technical difficulties in respect of the Tiger that have limited ability to maneuver.

For a distance of 50 -100 Km. It needs to be transported.

For this a central location of Tiger is not appropriate because you could not get them in time in the Impiego area.

These are the points that he wanted to expose and consequences drawn from them are different from those to which the Army Command has arrived.

SALEMI GROUP. Do you think that for tasks that you may have is too weak. Another thing, which as an airman you mean, you want that, for obvious reasons, keep the reunited "Goering". He realizes that it is not entirely possible.

On the other hand it would be desirable that it was put into suitable location for training of the troops is not yet complete.

It accentuates the idea that the observations he made, made them for the order from the Fuhrer had to supervise the use of German troops.

Etc.. Does that explain his ideas; in its conclusions it had to take into account the Italian troops.

If he had a kind of Atlantic Wall not be flocking reserves it is you could count on one in the line.

Kess. Also on the Atlantic Wall are held reserves.

Etc. The 1st line is very weak. It takes a long time and many means to strengthen it substantially.

The points that enemy can be selected as targets are many. He does not know what would be. He thinks that the attack zone can be:

- * western spire, methodical suggested by the Anglo-American systems and the greater proximity to the Tunisian coast,
- * Agrigenro area, which can lead to a successful separating the east or from the west coast of 'Island;
- * southeastern cusp, very convenient setting in which landings can act several means of which on the other hand the enemy can have.

Landing in this area the enemy is closer to the Strait. How to use the Germanic units yes they presented two cases:

- * project them on the coast:
- * keep them as a reserve.

He preferred that 2nd case-by uncertainty about the area of the enemy's attack:

-* entrust the defense first to the Italian troops doing follow the German troops towards the main attachment, the area that now you can not spell since the landings will be made in several places;

-* bring German troops much back and then remain bind to a stretch of coast where the enemy can not attack holding them back you have those disadvantages that Marshal emphasized however, able to use them where the enemy actually attacks.

Kess. If on the road is destroyed 4 or 5 trucks the road becomes impassable, and the possibilities of movement remain annulled.

Exc: I have done so much issues of assignment of divisions "Sizilien" or "Goering" east and west: my proposal was that the division intended in the West had a tactical unit Salemi area and 2/3 more to the west, as It was decided at yesterday's meeting. There are difficulties in that area masking, which has led to the choice for the division intended for the West area that has Caltanissetta for extreme eastern boundary.

If it happens that, given the available forces, the enemy attacks the southeastern cusp and the Agrigento area, renouncing to the west, the deployment adopted gives me the opportunity to

division that is in the West to flow towards Licata and Agrigento with three roads that may have available.

Kess. It has the impression that you are to hunt these troops into a trap.

Exc: And then what would you propose?

Kess. He exposes personal idea. See separate Sicily into two parts: think it is difficult to move troops out on either side. It must be on one and the other strong enough to be able to take the enemy in time of crisis.

You can think of an attack on the West because the area hunting from Tunis can act more effectively.

For this reason the Salemi Group would be too weak to drive the enemy into the sea. The Division 'Goering' is too weak in the infantry; for this reason it should be reinforced by a Regt. of "Sizilien". It considers that the use of troops is more favorable in the southeastern cusp, for the presence of Etna and the mountains that make up good handle and therefore dangerous the situation in the West.

It would be a shame to lose an entire tank unit, as in Tunisia, because closed in a valley from which they could not get out. It proposes the use of all "Goering" in the east, as well as a regiment of "Sizilien", for greater ease of movement that allows you to better exploit the mobility of "Goering".

Exc: Can I be attacked if not tonight in one of the coming days. I agree that changes deployment of the "Sicily" div. now? It would be something that should take place when all the "Goering" was arrived.

Kess. The "Ens" regiment should stay where it is; in danger of crisis we must do things as you can.

Exc: Do you think the Marshal did not consider that the "Sizilien" div. has to move up to Mazzarino. (Exposes the situation). The fundamental question was to see if the division had to be in the 1st line or reserve.

What I can do is to bring it more to the coast and leave detached from "Sicily" the "Ens group."

There would be the possibility that the groups 'Fullriede' and 'Korner' could be picked as a army reserve and division "Goering" date to the sixteenth C.A. withdrawing an Italian division. In such a case it would have a reserve set up by an Italian division and 2/3 division "Sizilien". It's a question that has been proposed and has compiled a note that made study by the Chief of the G.S.. In the discussion yesterday was considered the case to push forward towards Gela a German division and keep at hand the spare Italian division.

Because here it is even better to look at the problem, he is ready to change provided that it has the feeling that this change is beneficial.

A German division employed in the East should be employed towards the Plain of Catania and possibly towards Syracuse -Augusta because this division can not cope in two directions at once, both the distance, both for the deficient road network.

I can give a division that can be the "Goering" from the XVI and withdraw the "Livorno."

The other two thirds of a German division prefers to keep them to fend for other eventualities. For this has been established at the northern area of the current to the west or to Agrigento - Sciacca. To the west, it has two divisions that are not motorized. Here flaws what has motorized holds it ready for operation.

Then there is the question of the time required because the "Goering" division reaches completion.

Kess. Still 5 or 6 days.

Etc. It claims to be puzzled, in imminence of the attack, to change an array in place with another who does not know if he can complete.

Kess. Until it is not ready for use, the division can not be put in the line.

Etc. That has assigned Leonforte-Adrano area because there is gathered.

Kess. If you examine the issue as a whole he sees that lack two regiments. The 'Ens' group is stronger in the infantry then the "Goering".

If you fear for Agrigento we should mediate send a group.

The "Goering" is too weak in the infantry in order to be employed in this area. It would be better to assign the "Sizilien" division.

Being able to give the Tiger to the "Goering" would agree put this to the east because it may have favorable terrain.

An attack on Porto Empedocle and Agrigento area could never earn as much ground as to prevent a counter-attack for the next day.

He insists that a regiment in Salemi is too little.

Etc. Given the organic characteristics of the "Goering" I've only known this morning, I conclude by offering a location that is close to the orders given by the German command and that Marshal Kesselring accepts recognizing the need to choose between the various requests as a happy medium.

THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF
 .of FF. AA. Sicilia
 F/to: Emilio Faldella

Appendix no. 8

ARMED FORCES OF SICILY
 Order of the battle of the 6th Army

6th ARMY -Command 6th Army - Intendenza 6th Army.

XII ARMY CORPS:

MOBILE FORCES: Division "Aosta"
 Division "Assietta"
 troops of the Corps and reinforcements

COASTAL TROOPS: 136th Inf. Regs. Autonomous
 Port Defense "N"
 208th Coastal Division
 202nd Coastal Division
 207th Coastal Division

XVI ARMY CORPS

MOBILE FORCES: Division "Napoli"
 troops of the Corps and reinforcements

COASTAL TROOPS: XIX coastal Brigade
 213th coastal divisions
 Port defense "E"
 206th Coastal Division
 XVIII coastal brigade

UNITS AVAILABLE

Operations in Sicily and Calabria
To the 6th ARMY COMMAND 'Livorno' division
various units

MOBILE GROUP: :of XII Corp. from. "A" "B" "C"
 :of XVI Corp "D" "E" "F" "G" "H"
TACTICAL GROUPS :of XII Corp four
 :of XVI Corp four

MILITARY COMMAND OF THE NAVY IN SICILY
Naval Base of Messina-Reggio Calabria
Naval Base of Augusta-Siracusa
Naval Base of Trapani

armored train
Surface Forces

AIR FORCE COMMAND OF SICILY
TERRITORIAL ANTI-AIRCRAFT DEFENSE

ARMED FORCES COMMAND OF SICILY
6th ARMY COMMAND

Commander	Army General Alfredo Guzzoni
Chief of Staff	Brigadier General Emilio Faldella
Deputy Chief of Staff	Colonel of G. S. Orazio Bogliaccino then Colonel Galliano Scarpa
Chief of operations office	lieutenant colonel of G. S. Giuseppe Poli
Chief of Information Office	Colonel Alberto Seraglia
Chief of telecommunications office	Captain Andrea Passatore
Chief of regulations office	Lieutenant Colonel Francis Salamano
Chief of secretariat office	Lieutenant Colonel Alfredo Diaconale
Liaison Officer:	
with Superesercito,	Lieutenant Colonel of G.S. Antonio Gualano
with Royal Navy	Captain Gastone Minotti
with R. Air Force	Colonel A.A. Nerio the Brunetti
with the M.V.S.N.	Lieutenant General Enrico Francisci
Commander of RR.CC.	Brigadier General Amedeo Branca
Commander of Artillery	General of Div. Mario Van den Heuvel
Chief of Office of Artillery Command	Colonel leonardo Lorito
Commander of Engineers	Major General Francesco Ravera then Major General Vincenzo Jacoe
Chief of Office of Engineers Command	Colonel Domenico Bianco
	<i>Stewardship of the 6th Army</i>
Intendant General	General Brigadier Ugo Abundance
Chief of Staff	Colonel of G.S. Guido De Fonzo
Director of Health	Colonel doctor Gioacchino Passalacqua
Director of Commissioner	Colonel Michele La Nigra
Director of Administration	Lt Colonel Livio di Nardo
Director of Artillery	Lieutenant Colonel Fernando Lollini
Director of Engineers	Lieutenant Colonel Giovanni Pilato

Director of equestrian and veterinary	Colonel Benedetto Angiolucci
Director of transport,	Lt. Colonel Enrico Marucci
Director of automotive services	Colonel Cesare Bellini
Director chemical services	Lt. Col. Amedeo Marchi
Director of the stages	Colonel Augustine Ferrauto
Director of the streets	Colonel Domenica Mergoni

XII ARMY CORPS.

Commander	General of Army Corp <i>Mario Arisia</i> ; from July 12: General of Army Corp <i>Francesco Zingales</i>
Chief of Staff	Colonel of G.S. Attilio Quercia
Commander of the artillery	Brigadier Lorenzo Caratti
Commander of the engineers	Brigadier General Rodolfo Cortellessa

MOBILE FORCES

“AOSTA” division	Commander: General of Division Giacomo Romano
	Commander of the infantry general brig. Umberto Marchesi
	Chief of S.G. Colonel Mario Cipollini
5 th Infantry Regiment	Colonel, Girolamo del Giudice
6 th Infantry Regiment	Colonel Paolo Petroni then Colonel Giuseppe Zorzoli
171 st Legion CC.NN. battalions CLXVIII-CLXXI	
XXVIII mortar battalion	
22 nd artillery regiment	Colonel Dandolo Battaglini
	groups: I 75/27 Horse drawn
	II 75/27 Horse drawn
	III 75/18 with mechanical towing
	IV 75/13 Donkey
	two batteries A/A of 20 mm.
engineers battalion services.	

Division "ASSITTA"

Commander: General div. Erberro Papini
then general div. Francesco Scotti and on
July 26 general div. Ottorino Schreiber
Chief of G.S.: Colonel Mariano Dominici

29th Infantry Regiment

Colonel Mario Fontana

30th Infantry Regiment

Lieutenant Colonel Francis Morettini

17th Legion CC.NN.

battalions: XVII-XVIII

CXXVI: mortars battalion

25th Artillery Regiment

Lieutenant Colonel Giuseppe Properzi

Groups I 100/17 Horse drawn

II 100/17 Horse drawn

III 75/27 Horse drawn

IV 75/27 Horse drawn

two batteries A/A of 20 mm.

engineers battalion
services.

Troops of the Army Corps:

CXII Machine Gun battalion

available to the 208th coastal division

12th Artillery grouping

(Colonel Ferdinand Ainis)

XXI Group 105/28

XXII Group 105/28

CXXI group 149/13

CXXII group 149/13

XLVIII group 105/28

VII Anti-Aircraft group with 75 CK.

REINFORCING UNITS

448th coastal battalion motorized

breakdown by companies in the "mobile Groups"
"A" "B" "C"

10th Bersaglieri regiment

was the "Tactical Group" of Chiusa Sclafani

(Lieutenant Colonel Pio Storti)

XXXV-LXXIII-LXXIV battalions

177th Bersaglieri regiment

available in 207th coastal division

(Colonel Alessandro Venturi)

DXXV - DXXVI - DXXVII battalions

LI Bersaglieri battalion

Tactical Group "Inchiapparo-Casale"

(Reduced strength)

1st Bersaglieri antitank Battalion

50th motorcyclists company
 161st motorcyclists' company
 XII battalion command Lt. Tank
 CII battalion R/35 tanks (50 wagons)

10th armored cars Squadron (13 aut.)
 CXXXIII 47/32 semoventi Battalion

CIV Battalion Anti-tank 47/32

tank unit (6 off. 130 men. without tanks)

4th 75/18 semoventi Company

(10 semoventi *without personnel*)

1st squadrons Group "Palermo"

1st Motorized machine gun company

CCXXXIII group "Centauro"

75/27 Mechanical towing

XIX group «Centauro» 105/28

CX 75/27 train

Mechanical towed 2 batteries

CIII Group 75/27 train

Mechanical towed 12th battery

82nd battery 75 mod. 97/37

to the "Assietta" div.

"Mobile Group" "B"

construes the command of " Mobile Group" "A"

broken down by companies in the " Mobile

Groups" "A", "B", "C"

"Tactical Group" of Chiusa Sclafani

distributed by companies in the " Mobile

Groups" "A", "B", "C"

available to the 207th div. cost.

the 2nd co. to " Mobile Group." "C"

"Tactical Group» Campobello-Ravanusa

available to the 207th div. cost

4th and 5th Ber. with "Assietta" div.

6th Bn. "Mobile Group" "B"

available to the Corps.

with "Mobile Group" "A"

with 10th Bersaglieri

with tactical group "Inchiapparo-Casale"

COASTAL TROOPS

INFANTRY	ARTILLERY	REINFORCING UNITS
136 th Reg. Auto. Battalion. 103 465 Port defense "N" (Gen. Brig. Giuseppe Molinero)		
Battalion. 304 344 476	XLI group p.c. 51 st Bn. p.c.	I group 100/17 of the 25 th Art. "Assietta"
group cavalry XXX onfoot.		

INFANTRY	ARTILLERY	REINFORCING UNITS
208 th Coastal Division (Gen. Div. Giovanni Marciani) 133 rd Regs. Battalion. 244 423 498 147 th Regs. Battalion. 438 539 378	28 th grouping CCXV group 100/17 CXXIV group 105/45	
202 nd Coast Division 120 th Regs. Battalion. 387 497 245 380 857 142 nd Regs. Battalion. 377 427 466 490 124 th Regs. Battalion. 376 386 543	43 rd grouping XX group 1 bty. 149/35 1 bty. 155/36 LVI Group CCXVIII group 100/22 CXLIII group 149/35 CLVII group 149/19 CXLI group 75/27 LXXXVIII group CLXXII Group 105/28 XXII group p.c.	
207 th coastal division (Gen. Div. Ottorino Schreiber, from July 12 Brig Gen. Augusto de Laurentiis) 138 th Regs. Battalion. 420 CIX mitr. 388 380 139 th Regs. Battalion. 419 390 538	12 th grouping (Col. Corrado Ravaioli) CLX group bty. 485 149/35 bty. 487 149/35 bty. 150 105/27 XXXV group bty. 151 105/27 bty. 158 105/27 bty. 159 105/27 bty. 331 75/27 CCXXXII group 1 st bty. 100/22 2 nd bty. 100/22 CXLV group bty. 152 105/27 bty. 198 105/27 bty. 79 75134	177 th Reg. Bers. 1 st comp. motor MG. CIV A/T Battalion Armored train R.M. 120/45 4 pieces Armored train R.M. 4 pieces 76/40

XVI ARMY CORP

commander Chief of Staff Artillery commander Commander of Engineers	general of the Army Corps Carlo Rossi Colonel of S.M. Gian Felice Grosso Brigadier General Giuseppe Cinti Brigadier General Antonio Fazio
MOBILE FORCES division "NAPOLI" 75th Infantry Regiment 76th Infantry Regiment 173rd Legion CC.NN. battalions CLXIX-CIXXIII LIV battalion mortars 54 th Artillery regiment Groups I 100/17 Horse drawn II 75/27 Horse drawn III 75/18 towed IV 75/18 towed two anti-aircraft batteries from 20 mm	commanding general of Division Giulio Cesare Gotti Porcinari commander of the infantry Brigadier general Rosario Fiumara Chief of S.M. Lieutenant Colonel Tancredi Tucci Colonel Francesco Ronco Colonel Giuseppe Salerno Console Giuseppe Busalacchi Colonel Amedeo Moscaro
<i>Troops of the Army Corps</i> XII Machine gunners battalion 40 th artillery Grouping (Colonel Francesco Gennaro) X 105/28 group (two batteries) XVI group 105/28 CIX group 149/13 CX Group 149/13 XXIX group 105/28 XI anti-aircraft 75 CK group.	assigned to the defense of Catania airport

REINFORCING UNITS	
LVIII Bersaglieri battalion 52nd motorcyclists company 53rd motorcyclists Company 54th motorcyclists Company 155 th motorcyclists Company 2nd Motorized Machine gun company 3rd Motorized Machine gun company " 7th Motorized Machine gun company	"Tactical Group" Lingfield reinforcing the 19th coastal brigade "Tactical Group" Carmito "Tactical Group" Lingfield "Mobile Group" "E" "Mobile Group" "D" "Mobile Group" "F" "Tactical Group" Barcellona
CI tank battalion R/35 (50 tanks) 2 tank company in 3000 CCXXX propelled battalion 47/32 (15 semoventi) CII Anti-tank battalion 47/32 CIII Anti-tank battalion 47/32 XVI Anti-tank Battalion 47/32 CXXVI group 75/27 towed	distributed by companies to " Mobile Group" "D" "E" "F" "G" "Mobile Group" "H" reinforced the 206th coast Div. 1 st co. "Mobile Group" "F" 2 nd co. "Mobile Group" "E" 3 rd co. "Mobile Group" "G" 1 st co. "Mobile Group" "D" 2 nd co. "Tactical Group" Barcelona 3 rd co. "Mobile Group" "H" assigned to the XIX coastal brigade 1 st and 3 rd the battery with the command of group reinforcing the division "Napoli" 2 battery "Mobile Group" "F"

COASTAL TROOPS

INFANTRY	ARTILLERY	REINFORCING UNITS
XIX coastal brigade (Gen. Brig. Boccherti Giovanni) 179 th Reg. bns. 435 500 140 th Reg. Battalion. 101 447	Artillery units in reinforcement 61st grouping (Lt. Col. Antonio de Francesco) bty. 122/45 bty. 75/27 bty. 75/27 Three bty. 122/45 one bty. 105 two bty. 75/27	52 nd motorcyclists co. XVI Anti-tank Battalion
213 th Coastal Division (Gen. Div. Carlo Gotti)	21 st grouping (Col. Roberto Cimmaruta)	

Operations in Sicily and Calabria

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INFANTRY	ARTILLERY	REINFORCING UNITS
<p>135th Regiment, Battalion 369 102</p> <p>independent battalion 372</p> <p>55th MG company.</p> <p>Port Defense "E" - Catania (Gen. Brig. Azzo Passalacqua) Battalion. 434 477</p>	<p>CXLIV group 305/17</p> <p>275th bty</p> <p>276th bty</p> <p>XXX Group</p> <p>162 bty. 149/35</p> <p>165 bty. 149/35</p> <p>226 bty. 105/14</p> <p>153 bty. 105/27</p> <p>3 bty. 149/19</p> <p>182 bty. 105/27</p> <p>CCXXX group 100/22 three batteries</p> <p>26th bty. 75/27</p>	<p>naval armed train 4 guns 120/45</p>
<p>206th coastal division (Gen. Div. Achille d'Havet)</p> <p>146th regiment Battalion 430 (Colonel Felice 437 Barrimmo Cancellara) 374</p> <p>three MG co.</p> <p>122nd regiment Battalion. 243 (Colonel Camillo d'Apollonio) 375</p> <p>123rd regiment Bn 381 (Col Giuseppe Primaverile) 383 542</p>	<p>44th grouping (Col. Romeo Escalar)</p> <p>CXLIV Group 149/35</p> <p>79th bty</p> <p>80th bty</p> <p>81st bty</p> <p>CCXXIV Group 100/22 bty. 1st – 2nd -3rd</p> <p>CII Group 75/06</p> <p>47th bty.</p> <p>48th bty</p> <p>CLXI Group 149/35</p> <p>52nd bty</p> <p>53rd bty</p> <p>54th Bty.</p> <p>CLXII group 149/35</p> <p>74th Bty.</p> <p>73rd Bty.</p> <p>227th Bty 105/14</p>	<p>CCXXX Battalion semoventi 47/32</p>
<p>XVIII coastal Brigade (Gen. Brig. Orazio Mariscalco)</p> <p>178th regiment Battalion. 501 (Col. Sebastianello) 389</p>	<p>6th grouping (Col. Giustino Freda)</p> <p>CLXII Group 149/35 75th Bty.</p>	

INFANTRY	ARTILLERY	REINFORCING UNITS
	XXI Group 75/27/06 49 th Bty 330 th Bty 452 nd Bty another two bty.	
134 th Regiment Bn. 429 (Col. Giuseppe Altini) 384	288 th bty. 155/36 CCIX group 100/22 bty. 1 st – 2 nd -3 rd 81 st bty. 75/34	

UNITS AVAILABLE TO THE 6th ARMY COMMAND

Division "Livorno"	commanding general of division Domenica Chirieleison commander of the infantry Brigadier General Ilo Perugini, chief of staff Colonel Ruggero D'Errico
33 rd Infantry Regiment	Colonel Mario Mona
34 th Infantry Regiment	Colonel Carlo Martini
mortars battalion	
XI sappers battalion	
IV semoventi battalion 47/32	
28 th artillery regiment	Colonel Adamo Telò
I group 75/18 mechanical towing	
II Group 75/18 mechanical towing	
III groups 100/17 mechanical towing	
IV Group 100/17 mechanical towing	
three anti-aircraft batteries from 20 mm	
engineers battalion	
services.	
II assault battalion (10 th assault regiment)	Major Viro Marciano
jeeps company	
Paratroopers-saboteurs groups	
10 th 90/53 semoventi grouping	Colonel Ugo Bedoya
CLXI-CLXII-CLXIII groups of two batteries	
total 24 semoventi	

DV Artillery Group 90/53 2 nd battery of the CIII group Artillery 75/27	with two batteries with mechanical towing MOBILE GROUP made with the listed units among MOBILE FORCES of each corps. Task: reinforcing fixed defense airports.
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XII ARMY CORP

“A” stationed in Paccò - Comandante: Lieutenant Colonel Renato Perrone.

command XII tank battalion "Lt"

4th company CII tank battalion R/35

1st company 47/32 semoventi CXXXIII battalion

3rd company 448th mobile coastal battalion

2nd battery CX Group 75/27 T. M.

2nd Section 328th battery 20 mm. "Aosta"

“B” stationed in S. Ninfa - Comandante Lieutenant Colonel Vito Gaerano Mascio

Command CXXXIII 47/32 semoventi Battalion with 3rd company

6th Company CII Tank Battalion R/35

1st and 2nd company 448th mobile coastal battalion

1st platoon of the 50th motorcyclists company

6th battery CCXXXIII group 75/27 T.M.

2nd section 78th battery 20 mm.

“C” stationed in Portella Misilbesi - Comandante Major Vincenzo Fennel

command CII tank battalion

4th company 448th Mobile coastal battalion

5th Company tank CII Battalion R/35

2nd Company CIV 47/32 Anti-tank battalion

10th Battery 75/27 of the IV Group 25th Art. «Assietta», 4th section 78th 20 mm.

XVI ARMY CORP

“D” stationed in Misterbianco - Comandante Lieutenant Colonel Massimino D'Andretta

Command IC Tank Battalion (2 tanks)

3rd company IC Tank Battalion R/35 (16 tanks)

2nd motorized MG company (18 guns)

1st company CIII Anti-tank Battalion (6 guns 47/32)

7th company II/76th infantry

Command IV 54th Artillery Group "Napoli"

10th Battery 75/18 T.M. of the IV/54th "Napoli"

1st Section 354th battery 20 mm. "Naples"

"E" stationed in Niscemi - Comandante Captain Giuseppe Granieri

1st company CI Tank Battalion R/35

2nd company CII 47/32 Anti-tank battalion

4th company 501st coastal battalion

155th motorcyclists company

9th battery 75/18 of the III Group 54th Art. "Napoli"

1st section 326th battery 20 mm. "Assietta"

"F" stationed in Rosolini - Comandante Major Stefano Argenziano

2nd Company CI Tank battalion R/35

1st company CII 47/32 Anti-tank battalion

2nd company 542nd coastal Bersaglieri battalion

3rd motorized MG company

2nd battery 75/06 of the CXXVI group with mechanical towing

"G" deployed in Comiso - Comandante Lieutenant Colonel Porcù

CLXIX CC.NN battalion 173rd legion

3rd company CII 47/32 Anti-tank battalion

1st platoon 2nd Company CI Tank Battalion R/35

8th Battery 75/18 T.M. of the III group of the 54th Art. " Napoli "

"H" stationed in S. Pietro - Caltagirone - Comandante Lieutenant Colonel Louis Cixi

3rd company CIII 47/32 Anti-tank battalion

2nd tank company Fiat 3000

1st 45 mm. mortar platoon of the I/76th Infantry

7th battery 75/18 T.M. of the 54th Art. " Napoli "

TACTICAL GROUPS

constituted with units already listed among the

MOBILE FORCES of each Corps

Tasked: reinforcing the coastal defense.

XII ARMY CORP

"Inchiapparo –Casale"

LI Bersaglieri battalion

82nd battery 75 mod. 97/37

"Alcamo- Partinico»

171st CC.NN. Lcgione CLXVIII-CLXXI battalions

I artillery group 75/27 of the 22nd Art. "Aosta"

"Chiusa Sclafani"

10th Bersaglieri Regiment battalions XXXV - LXXIII – LXXIV
-1st armored car squadron
IV semoventi 75/18 company (10 semoventi unmanned)
12th artillery battery CIII group 75/27

"Campobello di Licara –Ravanusa"

Command 17th CC.NN legion.
XVII CC.NN Battalion
259th CC.NN machine guns company 17th legion
1st group cavalry squadrons "Palermo"

XVI ARMY CORP

"Barcelona"

7th motorized MG company
a assault platoon 447th coastal battalion
2nd company CIII 47/32 Anti-tank battalion
12th battery 75/18 of the IV Art. Group 54th "Napoli"

"Linguaglossa"

LVIII Bersaglieri battalion
54th motorcyclists company
11th battery 75/18 of the IV Art. Group 54th "Napoli "

"Carmito"

IV 47/32 semoventi battalion "Livorno"
Commander Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tropea
3rd motorcyclists company

"Comiso – Ispica"

Command 173rd CC.NN legion.
CLXXIII CC.NN battalion
174th CC.NN. MG company (173rd Legion)
2nd Mortar company LIV battalion "Napoli"
1st 47/32 Anti-tank platoon
I 100/17 group of 54th art. "Naples"

MILITARY COMMAND OF SELF IN SICILY MARINA

Commander

Fleet Admiral Pietro Barone

 NAVAL BASE OF MESSINA - REGGIO CALABRIA

Commander:	Fleet Admiral Pietro Barone
Commander of the Army troops	Brig. General Ettore Monacci
116 th coastal infantry regiment	(stationed on the Calabrian coast)
battalions	156
	502
	CCLV group art. 100/22

group of dismounted cavalry

XXIII

95th Legion CC.NN. (two battalions).119th coastal infantry regiment (stationed on the Sicilian coast)

370 battalions

371 CLVIII art. group 149/19

442

503

anti-ship and anti-aircraft batteries

double duty 14

anti-aircraft batteries 38

 NAVAL BASE OF AUGUSTA-SYRACUSE

Commander:	Admiral Priamo Leonardi
Commander Army troops	Colonel Francesco Damiano
121 st coastal infantry regiment	
battalions	246
	385 80 th Battery 76/42
	504
	540

battalion of sailors

battalion of airmen

anti-ship coastal batteries

medium and large caliber 6

anti-ship and anti-aircraft batteries

dual task 11

anti-aircraft batteries 6

armed train of Targia 6 pieces of 102 mm

two armed pontoons 2 pieces of 190 mm and 2 pieces of 149 mm

NAVAL BASE OF TRAPANI

Commander:	Rear Admiral Giuseppe Manfredi
137 th Coastal infantry regiment	
battalions	443
	505
	844
anti-ship and anti-aircraft batteries	
double duty	9

8 armored trains in total

SURFACE FORCES

Motor torpedo boats Squadrons Commander: Captain Mimbelli

GERMAN UNITS

Present in Sicily on July 9, 1943

- 15th Panzergrenadier Division "Sizilien"

Commander: General Rodt.

104th Inf. Regiment of Lt. Col. Ens with two battalions (Maj. Stellmacher and Capt. Struckmann)

115th Inf. Regiment of Col. Korner with two battalions (Maj. Von Borch and Capt. Künzel)

129th Inf. Regiment of Lt. Col. Fullriede with three battalions (Maj. Steuter, Capt. Tornow and Capt. Preikschat)

Artillery Regiment of Major Simon with four groups (Captains Hoberg, Meyrhofer, Reinisch and Tinzer).

Mortar regiment of Capt. Hütting of two battalions (Captains Hütting and Brandt)

Pioneer battalion of Capt. Poth

215th Armored Recon. Company of Capt. Gierga

Anti-Aircraft Flak Artillery Battalion Capt. Ahrens

Total tanks available: 67, 17 provided to the "H. Goering"

-Panzerdivision "Hermann Goering"

Commander: General Conrath

At the time this invasion allied armored division was incomplete and it included: one armored regiment, two motorized infantry battalions, a regiment of

artillery with three groups, a group of anti-aircraft artillery Flak, an recon company, a pioneer battalion and a mortar battalion. It had at its disposal a total of 82 tanks, in addition to the 17 borrowed from the "Sizilien". Of that division and the "Sizilien" it was extracted and deployed in Paterno the so-called "Schmalz" mechanized grouping, including the two battalions of the Infantry Regiment "Korner" of the "Sizilien" Div., a tank battalion of four companies, a recon company and an artillery group of three 150 mm. batteries.

COMMAND OF THE SICILIAN AIR FORCE

Commander: Air force General of the Division: Adriano MONTI

<i>Airport</i>	<i>Fighter</i>	<i>Observation</i>	<i>Maritime Reconnaissance</i>	<i>Torpedo Bomber</i>
Milazzo	-	-	1 Section	-
Catania	3 squadr.	-	-	-
Gerbini	-	1 squadr.	-	1 squadr.
Finocchiara	3 squadr.	-	-	-
Augusta	-	-	2 Section	-
Comiso	3 squadr.	-	-	-
Sciacca	3 squadr.	-	-	-
Stagnone	-	-	1 Section	-
Chinisia	3 squadr.	-	-	-
Boccadifalco	-	-	-	-
Mila	-	1 squadr.	-	-
Castelvetrano	-	-	-	-

Each airport was equipped with a FIXED DEFENSE consists of Army units (infantry companies - mortars - artillery batteries) not included in the tables of the Land Forces, with the task of defending the airports from paratroopers attacks. These places were dependent on said airport commanders (officers of the Royal Air Force).

Territorial Anti-Aircraft Defense

Location	Battery (caliber)							
	102/35	90/53	90/42	76/40	75/46	75/27	37	20
Reggio R.E.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R.M.	-	2	1	4	-	-	-	-
MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Messia R.E.	-	-	-	6	3	-	-	2
R.M.	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	-
MACA.	-	6	3	-	-	-	-	-
Jonis R.E.	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	2
Acireale R.E.	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1
Gerbini R.E.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MACA.	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Carania R.E.	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-
R.M.	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
MACA.	-	6	-	5	-	-	2	5
Vizzini (1) MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Augusta-Siracusa R.M.	6	-	-	11	-	-	2	-
Motta S. Anastasia MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Cassibile MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Pachino R.E.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Porto Palo MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Pozzallo MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
San Pietro MACA.	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Vittoria MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Punta Secca MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Gela R.E.	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2
MACA.	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Ragusa R.E.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Licats R.M.	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Porto Empedocle R.M.	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
MACA.	-	4 (2)	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sciacca R.E.	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
MACA.	-	1 (3)	-	3	-	-	-	2

Territorial Anti-Aircraft Defense (cont.)

Location	Battery (caliber)							
	102/35	90/53	90/42	76/40	75/46	75/27	37	20
Castelvetano R.E.	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	-
MACA.	-	4	-	2	2	-	-	2
Marsala MACA.	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	2
Costa Raia MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Lercara Friddi MACA.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Trapani R.M.	3	1	-	5	-	-	-	-
MACA.	1	2	-	3	-	-	-	-
Chinisia R.E.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
MACA.	-	1 (3)	-	3	-	-	-	-
Palermo R.E.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
MACA.	3	7	-	8 (4)	-	-	4	3
Termini R.E.	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	1
Roccaplumba (1) R.E.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Milazzo MACA.	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	1
<i>TOTAL</i>	13	56	4	73	8	5	18	43
R. Esercito	-	6	-	6	5	5	11	16
R. Marina	9	9	4	35	-	-	-	-
MACA	4	41	-	32	3	-	7	27
<i>TOTAL</i>	13	56	4	73	8	5	18	43

Batteries of the Army n. 49

Battery of the Royal Navy no. 57

Battery Volunteer Militia flak artillery n. 114

Total general .220

Notes: R.E. ∴ Batteries of the Army

R.M. ∴ Battery of the Royal Navy

MACA: Batteries Militia Anti-aircraft Artillery

(1) were included in the organization of the Anti-aircraft Defense the two groups 75 C.K. of XII and XVI Corps

(2) Two battery 90/53 were inefficient

(3) A battery 90/53 was inefficient.

(4) One of the eight batteries was inefficient.

MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS AND ORGANIZATION OF PANTELLERIA ON JUNE 10, 1943

-Commands -

- Commander Marittima Zone Pantelleria (Admiral Pavesi);
- Chief of the Navy G.S. of the Zone Commander Cavana;
- Commander Mixed brigade of troops (General Maffei);
- Senior Official in S.S.M. "assigned to the island enhancement" Lt. Colonel Bettio;
- Commander Defense fixed (Colonel Torelli);
- Commander Mobile Defense (Lt. Col. Viselli) (1);
- Commander M. DICAT Pantelleria.

- Battalions -

- I Battalion 5th Inf. Regt. "Aosta" (co. Command; 1st, 2nd, 3rd co. Rifles.; 4th co. MG.);
- II Battalion 5th Inf. Regiment.. "Aosta" (co. Command; 5th, 6th, 7th co. Rifles; 8th MG.); .
- III Special Mobile defense Battalion Pantelleria (Motorized) (140th Inf. Regt.) (co. Command, 9th, 10th, 11th co. Rifle 12th co. MG.).

- Troops of Brig. Mixed -

- co. "Troops Headquarters" of Pantelleria;
- autonomous Gunners Company G.a.F. -526th -535th, 654th - 655th -656th -657th -658th -753rd - 540th - 455th;
- coastal company of position machine guns from the "Aosta"-1st -2nd - 3rd;

(1) - the mobile Defense comprising:

- Control -I Battalion and III Special Bn. - CL Gr. Mixed art. (one bty. From 65/17) - one bty. 75/27 - 201st 81 mm. mortars Co. - Autonomous Tank Co. cars "L 3"

- 21st special Co., 5th Inf. Regiment "Aosta",
- 6th Special Co. II Battalion., 129th Inf. Regt.;
- 7th Special Co. II Battalion., 129th Inf. Regt.;
- 201st 81 mortars Co.;
- Autonomous Tank Co. L 3, 4th Tank Regiment;
- fixed airport defense.

- Artillery -

- CL mixed Artillery group comprising:
- 268th Battery of 65/17;
- 3rd Battery 75/27, 3rd Quick Art. Regiment.

-Elements of the IX Legion Milmart -

- Command Milmart "Pantelleria";
- I group. Anti-aircraft Art.;
- II Artillery group;
- II Group anti-aircraft machine gun.

Comprising:

- battery R.M. "Giuseppe Caminita";
- battery R. M. "Strascia Augustine";
- battery R.M. " Paolo Roccella";
- Batteries P.M. P.T. -129th – 174th -185th -292nd .299th -341st - 356th -382nd .406th -471st (A/A)
- 637th – 688th -738th -859th (A/A) plus another three P.T. batteries
unspecified individually.

-Engineers -

- Command and direction engineers "War of Work" Pantelleria;
- 107th Co. engineers workers (Z.M.);
- 108th Co. engineers workers (Z.M.);
- 47th Co. engineers workers (Z.M);

- 208th Co. engineers artisans;
- 50th Co. Mixed engineers.

-Services -

- 138th Field hospital;
- 139th Field hospital;
- a R. Navy hospital;
- 28th Truck section;
- a quadrupeds infirmary;
- Warehouses of the material defense command.

- Defensive organizing in coastal areas -

The elements listed above were used in three coastal areas and strongholds consideration permanent works and in field and grouped in "Groups of strongholds."

- Sector Tramontana
- Sector Levante divided into sectors.
- Sector Ponente

- Groups of strong points and strong points -

- Sector Tramontana:
Cuddie Red -Pantelleria -Cuddie Bruciate;
- Sector Levante:
Campobello -Tracino -Karuscia (strong point.)
- Sector Ponente:
Sataria -Scauri.

Appendix no. 10

**MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAND
OF LAMPEDUSA ON June 10, 1943**

1)-commands –

Island maritime military -commander: Capt. Bernardini;

- Commander Troops do R.E. Lampedusa: Lt. Col. Palaeologo;
- Commander Defense fixed;
- Commander mobile defense;

2) -Troops –

a) -Infantry:

- 365th Co. MG G.a.F. (Lev Sector.);
- 617th Co.. MG. G.a.F. (Lev Sector.);
- 653rd Co. MG. G.a.F. (Port Sector);
- 656th Co. MG. G.a.F. (Port Sector);
- 601st Co. MG. G.a.F. (Pon Sector.);
- 625th Co. MG. G.a.F. (Pon Sector.).

- 13th Co. auto. "Wolves", the 77th Inf. Regiment;
- 14th Co. auto. "Wolves", the 77th Inf. Regiment;
- 15th Co. auto. "Wolves", the 77th Inf. Regiment;
- 3rd Co. flamethrowers auto. Regt. Chemical;

- Three platoons 81 mm. Mortars;
- Two Platoons anti-tanks guns;
- Platoons auto. Tank Lt (4 wagons) (of the third Tank co.);

- Co. Special services, 5th Inf. Regiment "Aosta";
- Co. Command troops R.E.

b) -Engineers:

- 49th Co. Engineers workers (Z.M.);
- 122nd Co. Engineers workers (Z.M.);
- 125th Co. Engineers workers (Z.M.);
- 47th Co. Engineers workers (Z.M.);
- 51st Co. Mixed autonomous Engineers;
- 6th Special independent sappers Engineers platoon.

c) -Artillery:

- VI Autonomous art. group Milmart "Lampedusa" (with 9 btr. of various caliber - coastal defense)

bty. Milmart "Si," 457

IV / 76/40.

bty. Milmart L.P. 511;

- bty. Milman L.P. 259th; bty. R.M. L.P. 1
- bty. Milmart L.P. 136th; bty. R.M. L.P. 2
- bty. Milmart L.P. 421st; bty. 20 mm. sect. photoelectric.

- bty. Milman L.P. 376th;

-45th bty. 75/27 (art. R. E.)

-Command DICAT Lampedusa (anti-aircraft defense of the airport);

-625th, bty. A/A. from 75/46 -26th. Lt. mit. A/A. (1);

-other two bty. of 75/46 M. DICAT (1);

-89th Sect. Autonomous 20 mm .;

-90th Sect. Autonomous 20 mm .;

-.20th Sect. Autonomous 20 mm .;

-10th Sect. "Scotti" A/A

3) –Air Force:

- Lampedusa Airport.

. (1) - also with anti-ship and anti-landing tasks.

4) -Services:

- sub directorate of Engineering activities;
- 870th Field hospital (Alpine);
- place for dressing quadrupeds;
- various Depots
- 22nd Special truck section.

defense organization

Sectors	strongholds
"Levante"	Cala Francese -Cala Calabria –Cala Pisana -Punta Alaimo -Cala Pietra
"Ponente"	Cala Galera- Albergo Sole –Cala Madonna–Cala Greca
"Port"	Maluk -Punta Sottile -Guiccia – Center Port -Lantern

Appendix no. 11

**FROM SUPERAEREO
TO THE SUPREME COMMAND**

1B/10961

Rome, July 12, 1943

Having enemy bombing that led last days / with increasing intensity / of air bases Sicily / have considerably limited Island aerial ability /the present airports situation by approximately summary examination as allowed by difficult communications / appears the following /:

Finocchiara: efficient

Sigonella: landing carefully

Palermo: landing only on the west side

Catania: allows the landing only on the track

C. Vetrano: allows the landing with only a precaution on the track

Gerbini: useable

Sciacca: useable

Gela: useable (would be surrounded)

Comiso: prohibited (occupied)

Caltagirone S. Pietro: prohibited (occupied). /

Virtually they remain usable island / in whole or in part / only six airports and it can be expected that this situation will worsen in the next few days. /

Are in place works for rehabilitation airfields /

As a result of the bombing also suffered fighter units located in Sicily have suffered severe impairments / 3rd and 150th army group with Me. 109 all aircraft have been destroyed or severely damaged / On site there are no spare parts nor similar Germans units which to lend necessary Technical support - logistic / Personal these Groups / unless are obtained obtain from the O.B. S. M. 109 aircraft / already required for subsequent rearmament/ will be sent back to the mainland or distributed among other fighter units.

4th Stormo with 2 Groups and the 21st fighter Group have currently very low efficiency (about twenty aircraft efficient in all) as a result of 'intensive service which underwent & damaged suffered at the following enemy aerial attack. /

Only in small part / with little availability the existing fighters units in relation to the many needs / it has been able to provide at strengthening the island's fighters / by arranging sending a Re. 2005 fighter squadron removed from defense capital & one Squadron of the 51st Stormo removed Sardinia.

No other possibility exists to send units organic fighters to Sicily if not removing them from Sardinia/ it will be done, for now, at strengthening existing ones with share of aircraft taken from the Continent Groups & with those of new production.

ARMED FORCES COMMAND SICILY
(6th Army)
Office Operations

n. 16703/op

P.M. 5 to 21 July 1943 XXI

TO THE COMMANDER OF THE XII ARMY CORPS	P.M. 35
TO THE COMMANDER OF THE XVI ARMY CORPS	P.M. 19
TO THE COMMANDER OF THE GERMAN XIV ARMY CORPS (via the General Von Senger –Chief of Germanic Conect.Deleg.)	
TO THE MASTER OF ENGINEERS FF.AA. SICILY	SEDE
and, for information:	
TO THE NAVAL COMMANDER AUTO. OF MESSINA SICILY	
TO THE COMMANDER AIR FORCE OF SICILY	P.M. 3500
TO TERR. DEFENSE COMMANDER SICILY	P.M. 3550
TO THE ARTILLERY COMMANDER FF.AA. SICILY	SEDE
TO THE Intendente FF.AA. SICILY	SEDE

Map: 1: 500,000 -Sicily.

With the insertion of the Germanic XIV Corp. tasks and limits of dependant Corps shall be as follows:

I - *The task of the corps:*

a) XIV German Army Corps:

- Keep to the bitter end with the left and the center the most advanced line held today between Catania and Leonforte;
- Bend the right, only if forced by the action enemy, to occupy the line Leonforte - junction east of Nicosia, on which it will have to resist to the bitter end, making contact with XII C Corps.;

b) XII Army Corps::

- Keep long as possible by low occupation the line Petralia -Polizzi -Collesano - Campofelice (a coastal barrier);
- strongly hold the line Nicosia - S. Stefano di Camastra

on which he will have to resist to the bitter end; Nicosia will have to be particularly strong;
- assume the Tyrrhenian coastal defense from west to Cape Tindari (contact with the XVI Corps);

c) XVI Army Corps;

- assume coastal defense between C. Tindari and C. Peloro and C. Peloro defense of Port Catania (trench Buttaceto in contact with the Germanic XIV Corps).

The XVI Corps assumes command of Messina Base - Reggia and defense Port «E». .

II - Sector limits between the Army Corps:

Tindari (to XVI) -Montalbano of Eliconia (to XVI Corps - Croce Mancina (to XVI) - Randazzo (to XIV) -Cesarò (to XIV) - Troina (to XIV) - Nicosia (to XII) - Gangi and Petralia (to XII) – Croce Mancina (to XVI) - Montagna Grande (to XVI) -Taormina (to XVI).

From the XVI Corps., as mentioned in Chapter I point c), it depends on the 213th Coastal defense Division until the Porto Catania understood.

III -The Commander of the XII Corps, is responsible for coordinating the action on the left flank of his Corps with the right of the Germanic XIV Corps.

It also ensures that the commanders of G.U. operating to the left of Germanic units to establish contact with the commanders of these in order to ensure unity of action in the tactical field, and namely:

-maintain the balance possession of locations corresponding to the common boundary of the two Corps areas;

- To prevent any setback that is not made in accordance with neighboring units;

- Guarantee that are not carried out destruction which make laborious the retreat of the German units.

It is further established that Italian troops who are obliged to act mixed with allied units on the front of these estates. must conform to the orders of the said units; Similarly behave Germanic units, when they were to act in the sectors of the Italian G.U.

IV – German Gen. Stahel, with Headquarters in Trecastagni, has command of the Germanic artillery of all kinds that contribute to coastal defense from Catania to Naval Base of Messina.

The Commander of the 213th Coastal Division will make arrangements with the General to predicted for the best assistance of the German units.

V .The German 29th Division, subordinate to the commander of the Germanic XIV Corps, it will collect in the area. Lingfield - Giarre - Schisò, with the task:

a) to carry out immediate action to counter the enemy forces that disembarked on the Ionian coast;

b) to establish a Army reserve; must therefore be geared to act in the directions:

- Giarre - Acireale - Catania;

- Linguaglossa - Randazzo - Bronte - Adrano.

VI – *Works*:

The Commander of Army Engineers is responsible for:

a) strike up the back line bridge over the Torrente S. Fratello -Pizzo S. Filio -Pizzo

Luminara - Monte Pelato -Serra Castagna, who with extension Troina -Adrano -Biancavilla - Acireale, is last line of defense to the bitter end;

b) to organize the barrier of S. Fratello -Nord Pizzo S. Filio. .

c) The Command XII Corps will arrange the barrier of coastline in Campofelice and to S. Stefano di Camastra. Also will occupy with his troops the barrier referred to in point b).

- VII *use of road vehicles*:

1) Roadway Nicosia - Troina - Cesarò east of competence of the Germanic XIV Corps. It is, therefore, be given the opportunity to XII Corps. using the previewed agreements with XIV Corps.

2) Roadway Cesarò -S. Fratello: to the XII Corps.

3) Roadway Randazzo -Capo d'Orlando and its twin:

-Francavilla - Salia crossroads

-Taormina –Messina

in common to XIV and XVI Corps., with assignment to the XVI Corps – of the logistic organization.

4) Roadway Messina -C. Tindari: shared XVI, XIV and XII Corps, with assignment to the XVI Corps. logistics organization.

THE COMMANDING GENERAL

Alfredo Guzzoni

Appendix n. 13

Marconigram ENCRYPTED POPE

August 3, 1943

FOR THE COMMANDER 6th ARMY
AT UNIT COMMAND XII ARMY CORP
and, for information:
TO THE COMMAND XVI ARMY CORP
TO GEN. SENGHER - Chief German Deleg.
AT COMMANDER ARMED FORCES ARTILLERY
TO THE ENGINEERS ARMED FORCES COMMAND
TO THE ARMED FORCES stewardship
TO THE ARMED FORCES SERVICES OFFICE

No. 17152 / op

Notwithstanding my orders which marconigram n. 17118 / Op. On 2 current not sent at Gen. V. Senger and at XVI Command Corps, I have:

1) Remain on the line:

- a) Assietta Division Command;
- b) Artillery Command of the Assietta div. & Naples (to dependencies of command div. Assietta);
- c) 29th Infantry Regiment.

2) The Italian artillery that operate with the Germanic 29th Div. constitute the grouping under the orders of Assietta artillery command.

3) The Italian artillery operating with Germanic 15th Div. constitute grouping the orders of Aosta artillery command.

4) The Italian 29th artillery group of 105/28 continues to act with the Goering Division.

- 5) The Aosta divisional infantry command with remaining units of the Aosta & Assietta divisions fall back from current positions passing available to the XVI Corp. to be used in coastal defense.

Direct agreements between this control command & XVI Corps. concerning
-How to movement;
- Deployment zone. .

The commander XVI Corps. inform me immediately of what was agreed

General Guzzoni

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Uno dei bombardamenti su Lampedusa ai primi di giugno 1943

One of the bombings of Lampedusa in early June 1943

Operations in Sicily and Calabria



Il Generale Alfredo Guzzoni, Comandante delle FF.AA. della Sicilia

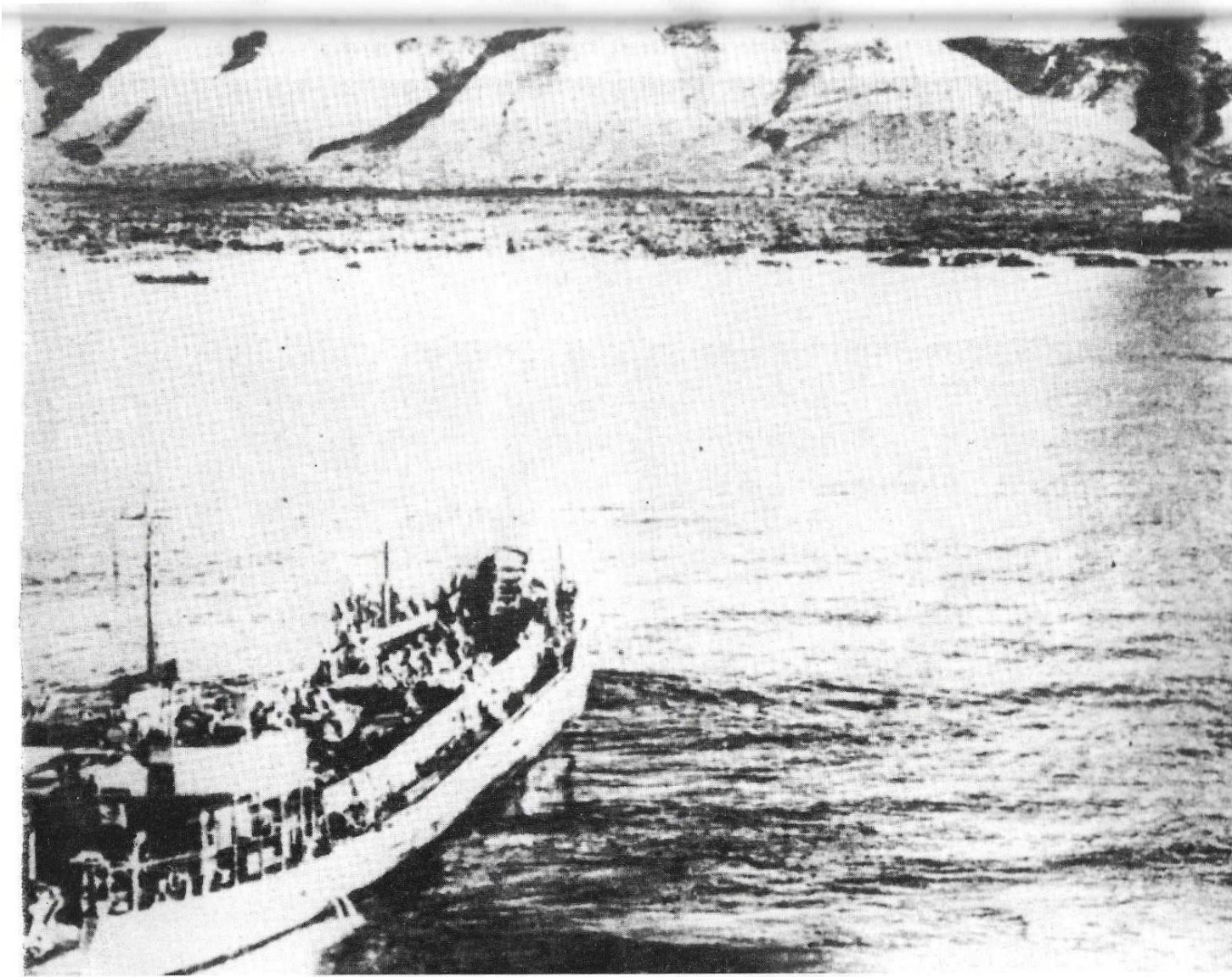
General Alfredo Guzzoni, Commander of the Armed Forces Sicily



Unità di fanteria della «Napoli» sotto il fuoco dell'artiglieria britannica

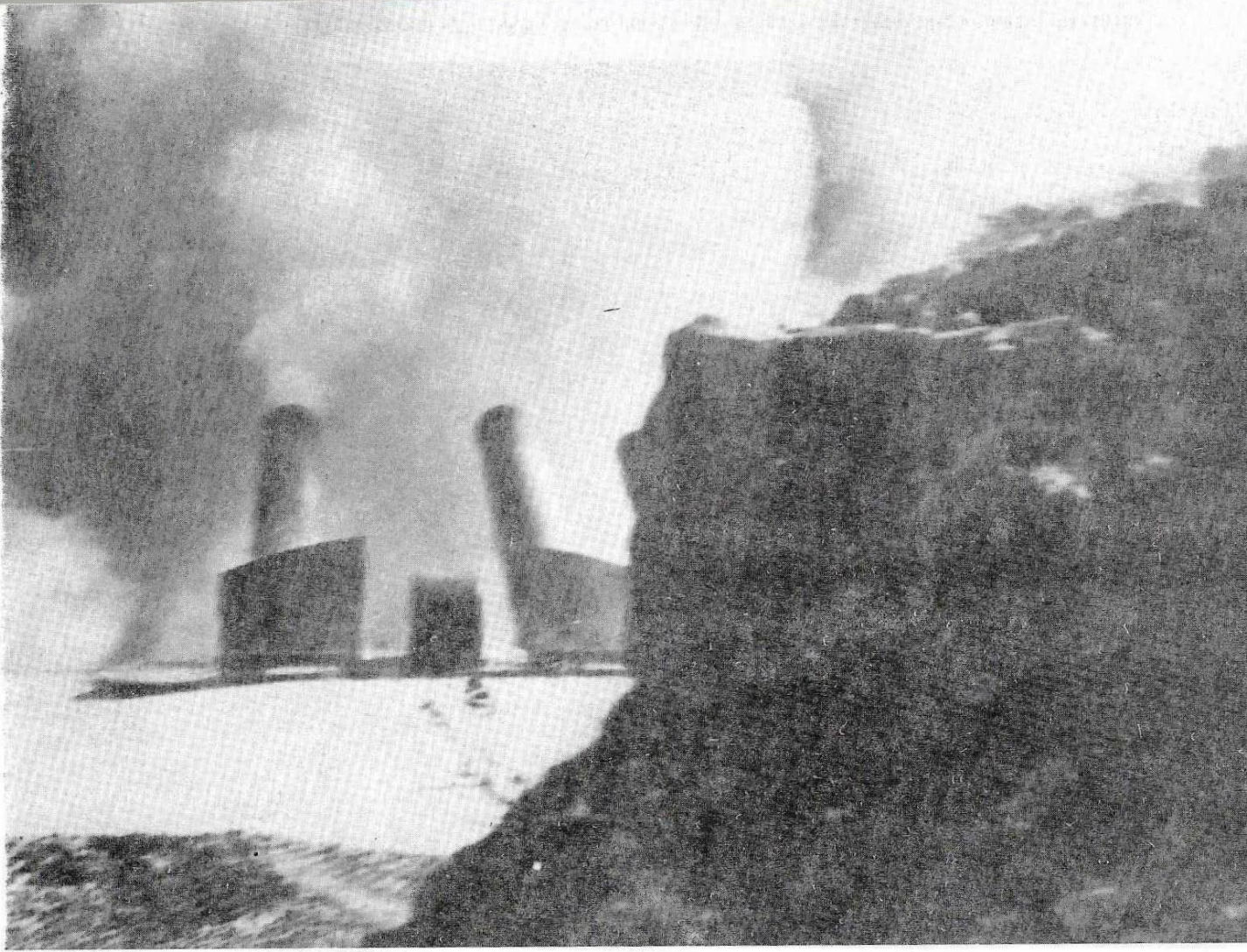
Infantry units of "Napoli" under British artillery fire

Operations in Sicily and Calabria



L'operazione «HUSKY» è iniziata e le unità da sbarco giungono ad ondate sul litorale

The operation "HUSKY" has begun and the landing craft come in waves on the coast



Esercitazioni a fuoco di una batteria costiera della difesa di Augusta - Siracusa

Exercises focus of a coastal defense battery of Augusta -Siracusa

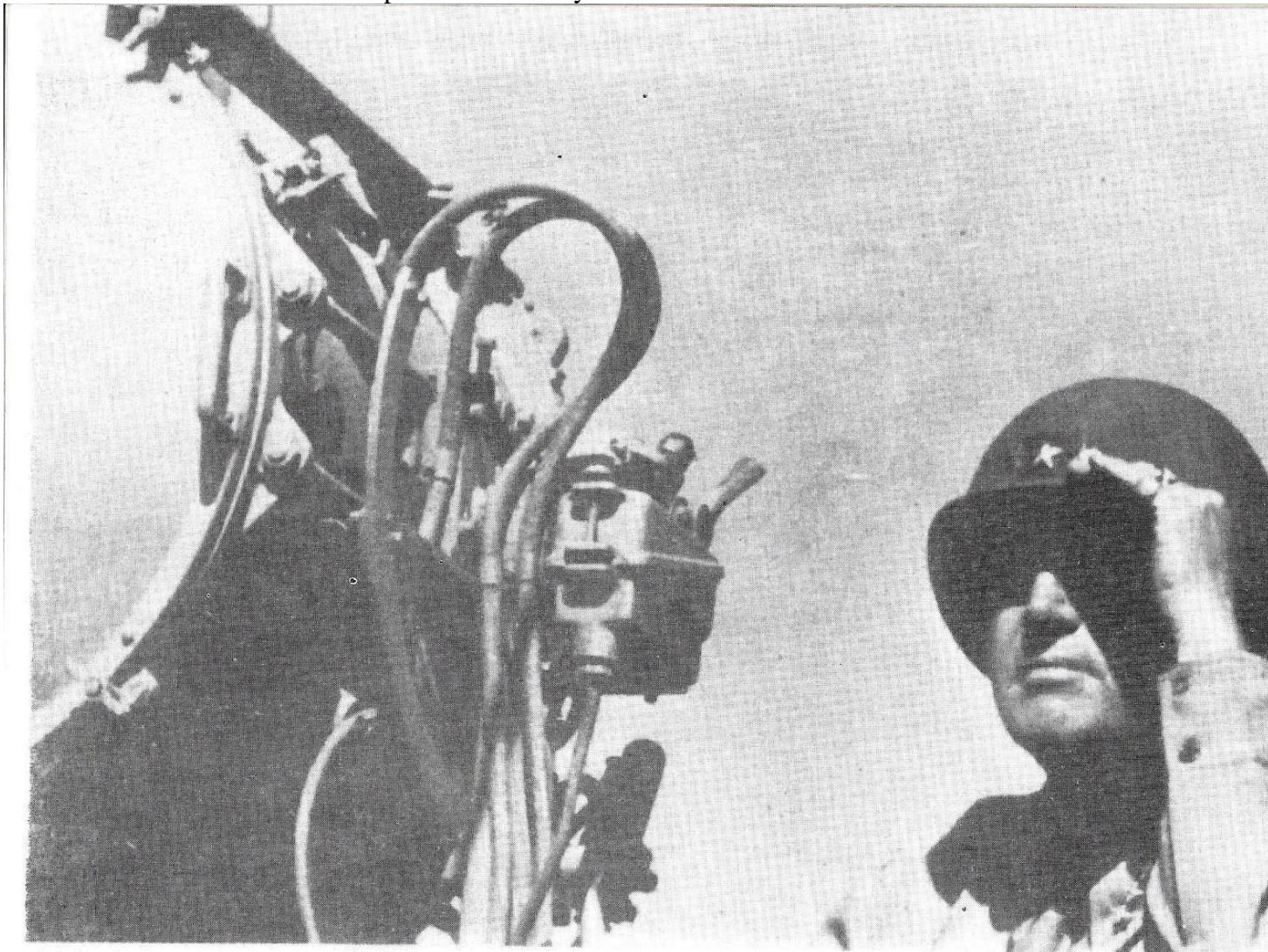
Operations in Sicily and Calabria



Il bombardamento aereo sviluppato sulle forze anfibiae americane a Gela il 10 luglio

The air raid developed on American amphibious forces in Gela July 10

Operations in Sicily and Calabria



Il Generale Patton, comandante della 7ª Armata americana, segue lo svolgimento dello sbarco a Gela

General Patton, commander of the 7th US Army, follows the course of the landing at Gela

Operations in Sicily and Calabria



I bassi fondali ostacolarono in più punti il regolare sbarco delle truppe britanniche

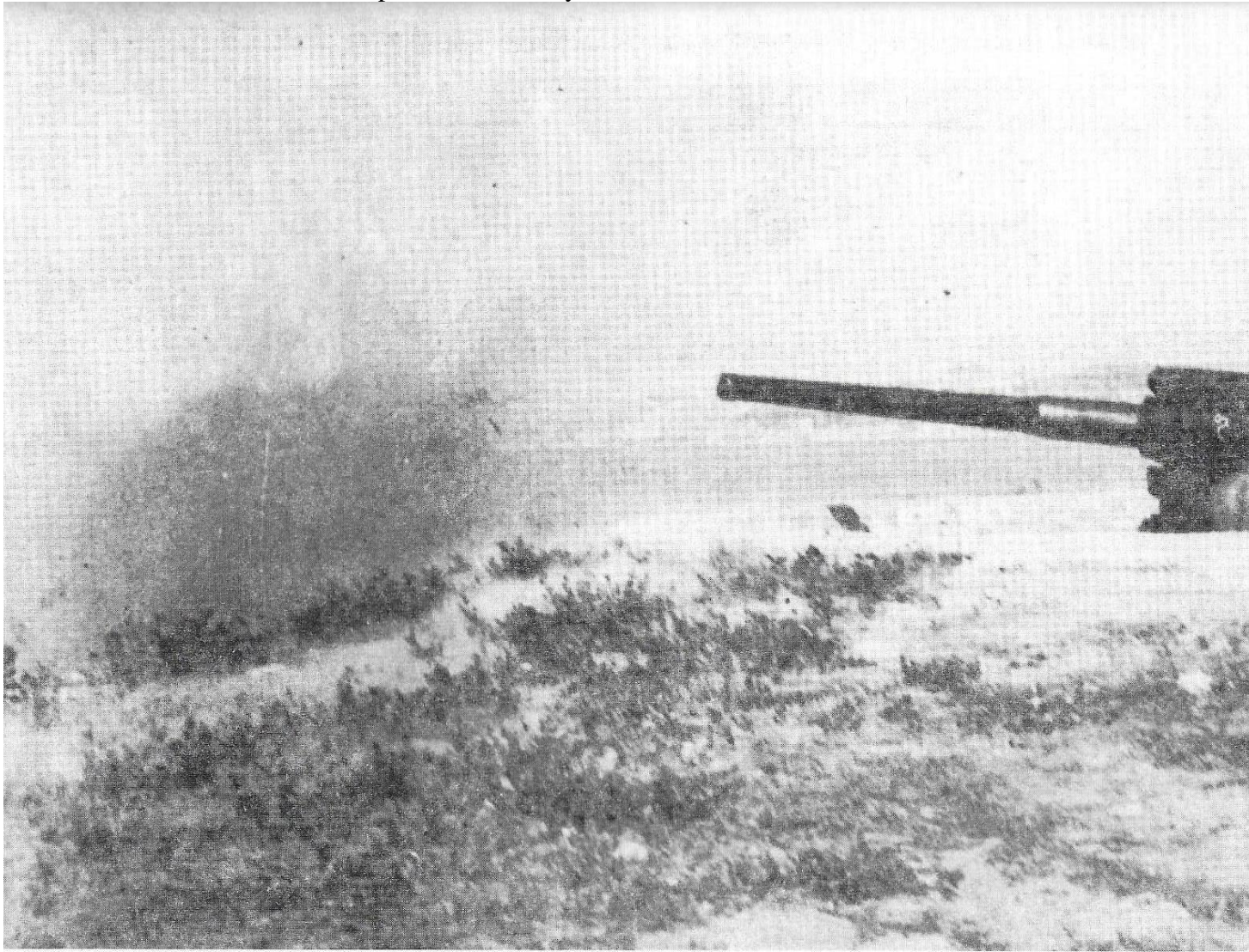
The deep water hindered at several points the smooth landing of British troops



Reparti costieri italiani durante le prime fasi dello sbarco alleato

Italian coastal areas during the early stages of the Allied landings

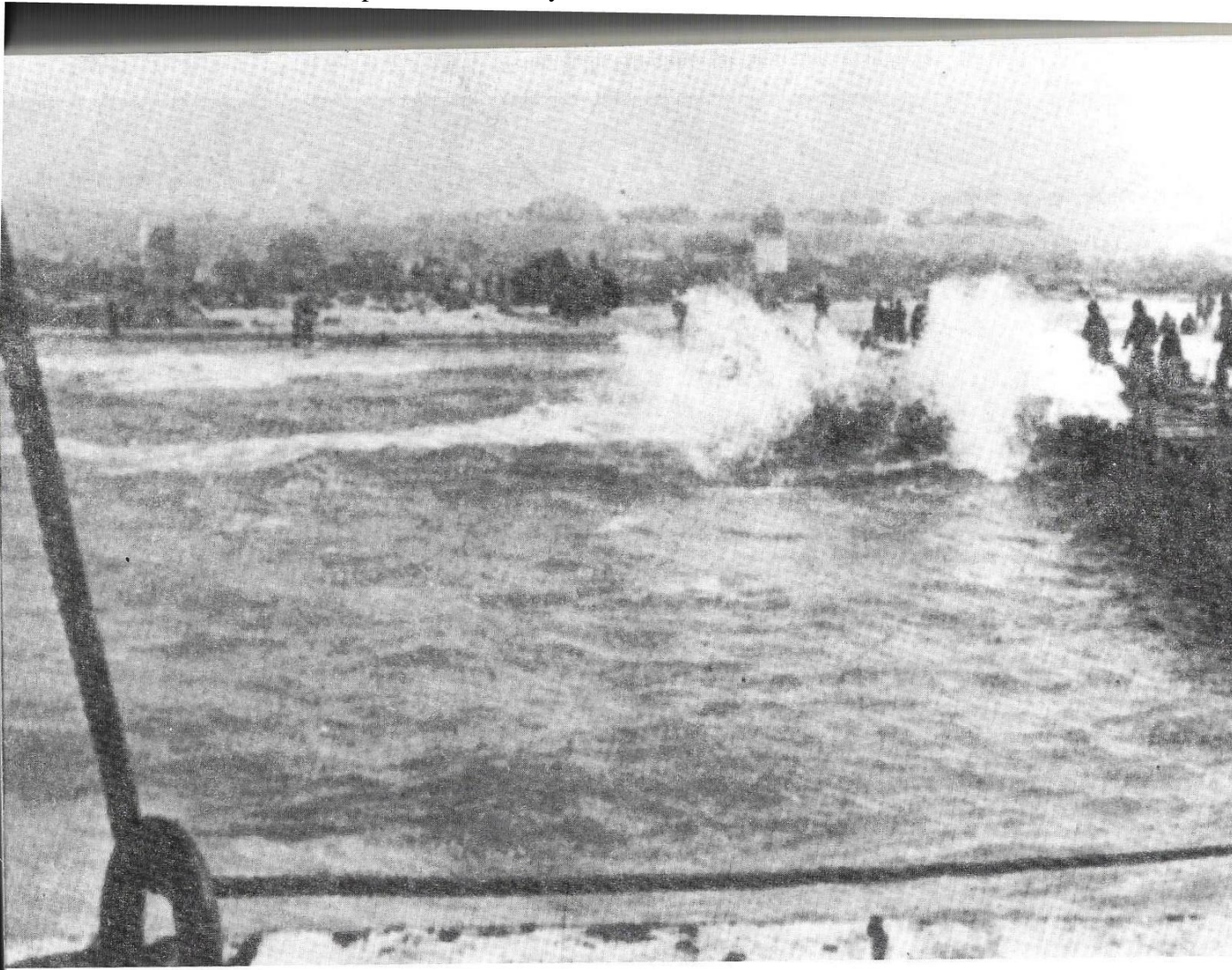
Operations in Sicily and Calabria



Una batteria costiera tenta di ostacolare i movimenti navali nemici

A coastal battery try to hinder the enemy ship movements

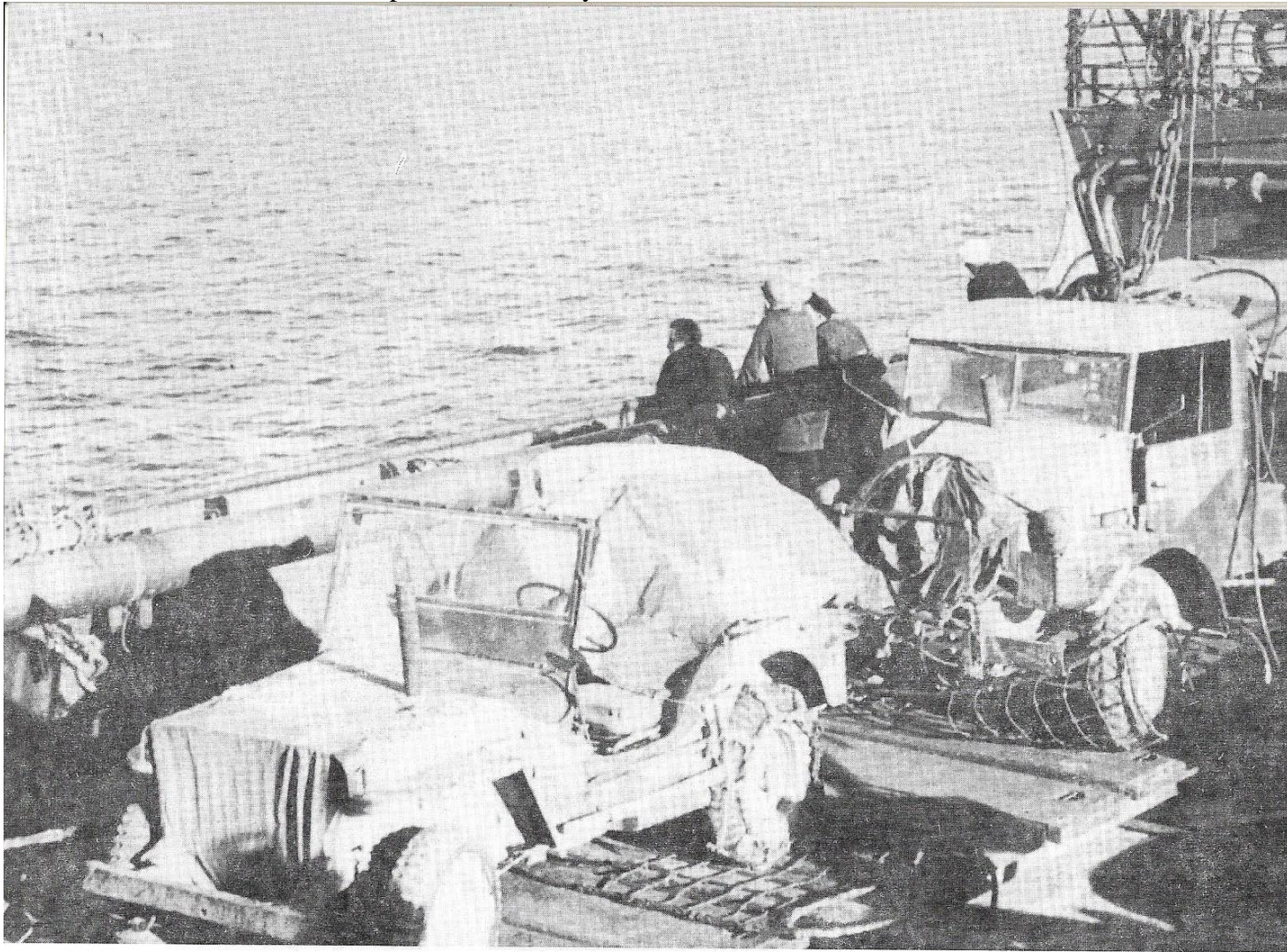
Operations in Sicily and Calabria



La difficoltosa messa in opera di pontili da sbarco nel settore americano

The difficult mass in work of pontoons landing in the American sector

Operations in Sicily and Calabria



A bordo di uno dei trasporti britannici del convoglio diretto alle spiagge di Avola

On board a British transport the convoy to the beaches of Avola



Un settore della difesa affidato ad una compagnia mortai

A sector of the defense taken by a mortar company